STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Chinatown Evictions Disrupt Elderly Community

by Lynda Carson

Young people rallied at City Hall to defend their elders from mass evictions in Oakland's Chinatown. Lydia Gans photo

More than 100 people showed up for a rally in front of Oakland City Hall on June 24 to unite tenants from the Pacific Renaissance Plaza with tenants and artists from the Alice Arts Center. Before heading inside City Hall to speak out against the threat of mass evictions, the speakers, music and dancers excited the crowd into a celebratory mood, despite the serious struggle against displacement they were waging.

As the chants grew louder and the excitement rose, both groups headed inside to a meeting of the City Council's Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) for a vote on the status of SRO Affordable Housing in Oakland.

After a number of speakers testified about the perilous plight of the tenants at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza and the Alice Arts Center, the CEDA committee voted on two measures in an attempt to find a solution for the threatened renters.

First, CEDA members passed a resolution to have city staff determine whether the City of Oakland had legal grounds to file a lawsuit against developer Larry Chang in an effort to stop the evictions at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza.

In the following vote, the CEDA committee passed a resolution requiring that any further reductions in rental units at the Alice Arts Center would have to go before the City Council before being allowed to take place.

Adam Gold of Just Cause Oakland has received much credit for his efforts to organize the groups into a political force that was able to focus public attention on the plight of tenants threatened by mass evictions in Oakland.

Evictions traumatize the elderly

Mass evictions occurring in Oakland's Chinatown have disrupted the lives of an elderly community of retired residents at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza, many of whom are disabled and feeling traumatized by the 90-day eviction notices.

On April 16, 2003, eviction notices were handed out to the elderly tenants of 50 rental units of affordable housing at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza near 9th and Webster streets in downtown Oakland. The tenants were given until July 31, 2003, to vacate the premises or face unlawful detainer lawsuits. The housing units occupied by the evictees are slated to be renovated and sold off as market-rate condos after the evictions take place.

Francis Chang, the son of elderly Mr. and Mrs. Chang, said that his parents have resided at the Plaza for nearly 10 years and have been traumatized by the eviction notices, which they received in two different versions. One notice in English was polite, while the other in Chinese was harsh and frightening to the elderly, Chinese-speaking tenants, Chang said.

Most of the frail, elderly tenants only speak Chinese and are afraid of being forced out of their beloved community that has been so vital to their existence for so many years. Vacancy rates in Chinatown are practically nonexistent, and relocating the elderly residents to locations foreign to them would be like taking fish out of water, said one of the local activists supporting the evictees.

On May 20, several of the frail and elderly tenants joined together with their supporters for a press conference in the courtyard of the Pacific Renaissance Plaza, pleading for help and asking that the evictions be immediately stopped.

Sau King Wong, age 76, asked for help, and said, "I am so worried, I can't sleep at night." She needs to use a wheelchair or a walker to move about.

Art Hom, the son of 87-year-old, disabled Wen Hom, is very concerned that the shock of being displaced from the Plaza will lead to the premature death of his mother, who has been terrified ever

See **Chinatown Evictions** *page eight*

Oakland Artists Under Attack Are Fighting Back

by Lynda Carson

Artists at the Alice Arts Center mobilize to confront Jerry Brown. Lydia Gans photo

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown's crusade against local artists continues to fuel community anger and distrust. The artists and residents of the Alice Arts Center charge that, last year alone, Mayor Brown spent 1.5 million tax dollars to renovate the basement of the Alice Arts Center to create a home for his private charter school, the School for the Arts, at the expense of the artists and residents already occupying the same location.

Mayor Brown is the chairperson of the School for the Arts, and had many locations to choose from in Oakland for his charter school. After years of hard work by local artists to make a success out of the Alice Arts Center, Brown decided to flex his muscles and place his own school there without concern about disrupting and displacing the existing programs.

During a meeting with the mayor in April 2003, Alice Arts Center organizations and residents were informed that Brown planned to move them out of their location in favor of expanding his year-old School for the Arts.

Outraged by the mayor's hostile takeover aimed at the Alice Arts Center and its budget, the arts organizations and residents decided to stay and fight the proposed displacement, which they said was an attack on artistic freedom in Oakland.

They quickly formed the Artists Coalition as a united front of artists and residents attempting to save the Alice Arts Center from Brown's greedy ambitions. They have galvanized community support and taken the battle back to the mayor.

On May 27, hundreds of artists marched from the Alice Arts Center to City Hall to confront Mayor Brown and his underhanded policies that continue to undermine local artists, dancers and musicians. Led by a throng of Congolese drummers, the crowd of nearly 300 artists, dancers, and activists filled the air with wonderful rhythmic harmonies that had onlookers coming out of small businesses to see what the commotion was all about.

The moment was electric, and the momentum of the crowd grew as they marched to bring their struggle to Mayor Brown's office. The colorful mass of determined protesters disrupted traffic along the way, and brought their message like a throng of thundering angels to the den of politicians who have been selling Oakland down the river for many years.

As the marchers reached City Hall, they completely filled the circle in front of the entranceway. Speaker after speaker denounced the policies of Jerry Brown, and charged that he has left the Alice Arts

See **Artists Fight Back** *page eight*

The Tragic Cost of Dumping the Sick onto the Street

by Terry Messman

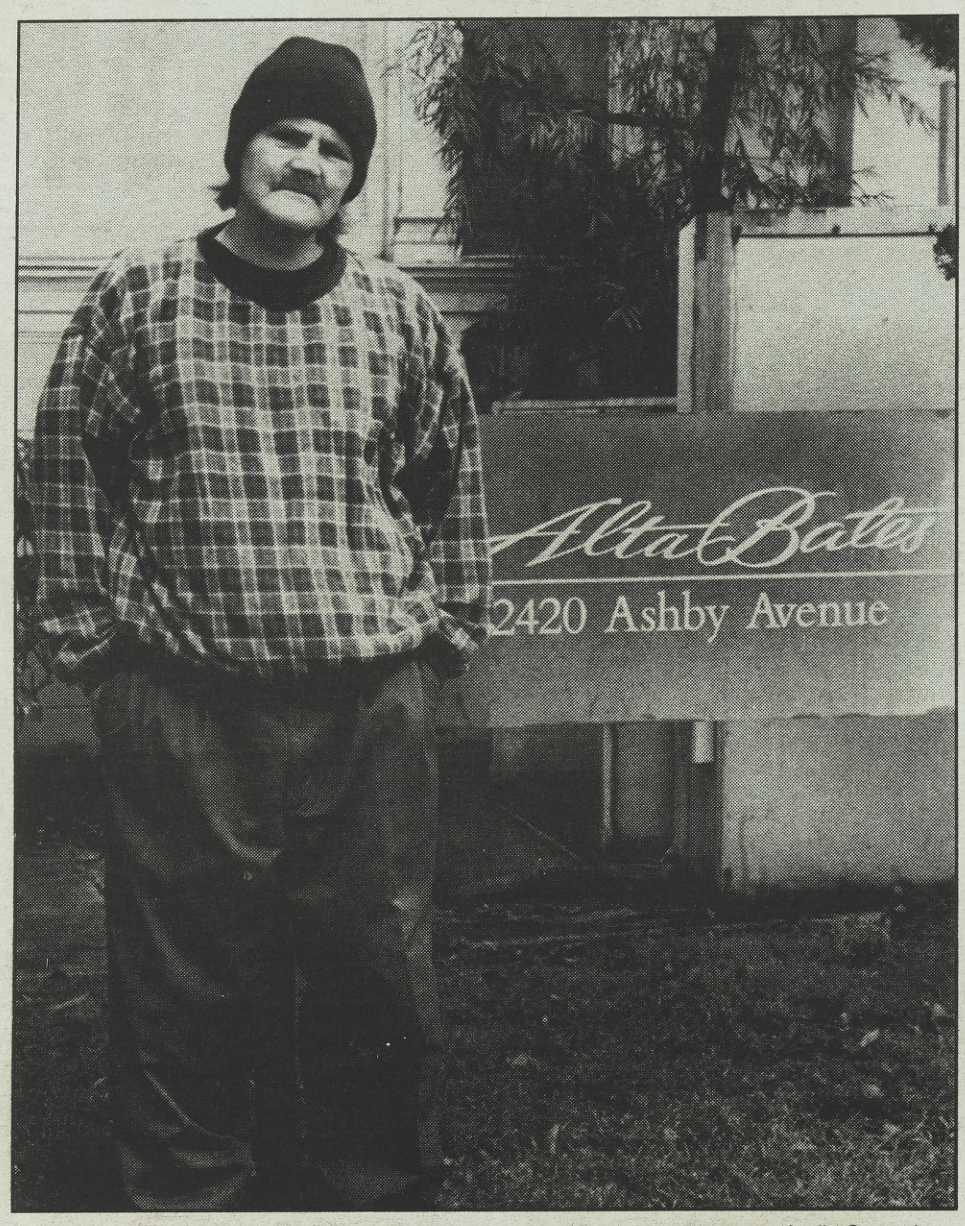
Even as the Berkeley Housing Department begins to evaluate the need for a respite care facility for the poor, the plight of a homeless man repeatedly dumped from area hospitals shows the tragic cost of allowing people with serious health problems to languish on the street.

After Berkeley hospitals continually dumped John Cantu out on the streets when he needed ongoing medical care, his health deteriorated to such an extent that he collapsed into unconsciousness while homeless in late May, 2003. When Cantu didn't show up for Father's Day to see his children, Chloe Castorena, his ex-wife, became alarmed and began searching for him, using her extensive knowledge of homeless services in the East Bay.

She finally found her ex-husband in Highland Hospital in the intensive care ward, and was told that his life was hanging in the balance. Cantu had been found unconscious in a diabetic coma on the street in late May, and also was suffering from hypothermia, pneumonia and a blood infection. When he regained consciousness, doctors told him they had been taking odds on whether he would live.

Cantu has been in the intensive care unit at Highland beginning on May 28, and was still there as of June 30. His medical crisis could have been averted if Berkeley had a respite care facility to provide the after-care Cantu needed for his recurring health problems. It also could have saved the enormous cost of being hospitalized in an intensive care unit for more than a month.

Street Spirit has been documenting the need for a respite care facility for homeless people in the East Bay in a series of articles beginning in January 2000. Such a facility would provide residential recuperative care for homeless people who are too ill for the hardships of the streets and shelters, and for those discharged from hospitals who need ongoing medical care. Respite care programs have been created in Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Denver, Seattle and Albuquerque. They offer round-the clock shelter, nursing care, physicians and physician assistants.



John Cantu needed respite care after his release from Alta Bates. Lydia Gans photo

"It's a sad state of affairs when there is no housing for someone who is legally blind, has diabetes and has all the other terrible health problems John has. It just seems that sometimes it is the people with the greatest needs who are most overlooked." — Chloe Castorena

BHD WILL STUDY RESPITE CARE

Now at last, the Berkeley Housing Department (BHD) has funded a study of medical respite care for the homeless poor. Tim Stroshane, senior planner in the BHD, will soon conduct a needs assessment.

"We know that the need is pressing," Stroshane said. "We do hope to have some kind of needs assessment put together at least by September, and we do anticipate having meetings with community providers of homeless services and with homeless people at various shelter sites and transitional housing sites."

Stroshane added, "The question that's on everyone's lips when they find out that I'm working on respite care is, 'Well, is there any funding for this?' I say, 'That's the $64,000 question, and I wish that there were even $64,000 available for it.' "

The City of Berkeley could conceivably come up with the capital funding to purchase or acquire a building for respite care. But the operational costs of staffing and providing medical care would have to come from federal, state and county funding. That's where the difficulties begin.

Federal funding for supportive housing from the HUD/McKinney Homeless Assistance Act could theoretically be used for respite care. "But because HUD's not funding new programs, it looks bleak for getting funding, at least from that source," Stroshane said.

Another possible source is Medi-Cal funding from the state. "That would be great, especially if you could get Medi-Cal reimbursement for at least a portion of the homeless people who might use this facility as an urgent-care clinic," Stroshane explained.

However, the California Budget Project's budget brief for May 2003 notes that the budget proposed by Gov. Davis to address the huge state deficit includes reducing Medi-Cal by $1.35 billion and denying coverage to as many as 555,000 adults. This drastic cutback would also deprive California of another $1.34 billion in matching federal funds.

At the same time, Alameda County is trying to reduce its enormous deficit by cutting health care to the bone, eliminating health care clinics and slashing programs in county hospitals. Any state Medi-Cal cuts would intensify this crisis.

Given these funding cutbacks, this may be the worst possible time to try to create a new respite care program for homeless people. But the case of John Cantu shows why it is absolutely essential.

REVOLVING DOOR TO NOWHERE

While homeless in Berkeley, Cantu, age 43, has gone on countless trips through the revolving doors that lead from the emergency ward of Alta Bates to being abruptly dumped onto the streets, only to undergo another health crisis that leads right back into the hospital. These jarring transitions from emergency ward to sleeping on the streets take place with the regularity of a recurring bad dream.

On May 28, 2003, Cantu was found unconscious on the street, a result of diabetes, prolonged exposure and pneumonia. He has been in Highland Hospital's Intensive Care Unit since then. Though his condition has apparently stabilized at the moment, Chloe Castorena said that in late June he had stopped breathing, and hospital staff had to resuscitate him.

Cantu walked a long, painful journey into that intensive care ward, as his slowly deteriorating medical condition was exacerbated every step of the way by his homelessness.

A WALKING DISASTER

"I'm a walking disaster, actually," Cantu said in an interview. "My body is really screwed up. I'm a diabetic, I have rheumatoid arthritis which has affected my eyes and hands, my knees and hips. As part of the diabetes, I have neuropathy, which is a nerve disorder and it's very painful. I have numbness in my lower extremities, in my toes and fingers."

Cantu is legally blind from the arthritis and the diabetes. "The arthritis created a calcium growth over the corneas of my eyes and scarred the corneas," he said. "So I see opaque. I see things very white, and I can't distinguish colors. I can determine how many fingers you're holding up at eight feet, and that's it. At 30 feet, things don't exist. My sight is very limited. Up close, I can't read."

Cantu was staying in a Berkeley shelter in October 2001, when one day, he got a cut on his toe without noticing, because he can't feel in his extremities. When he took off his boots, he found his sock and foot covered in blood. He went to the hospital and had to stay overnight because it was infected. The next day he was sent to the shelter for seven days on a lay-in because the doctors didn't want him on his feet.

Because of the diabetes, Cantu's feet and legs often swell up. He takes a diuretic to combat the swelling, and was under medical orders to keep his feet elevated, off the ground. That proved impossible at the shelter. Because shelter rules prohibited him from staying there during the day, he had to be on the streets all day, and had to keep on the move to avoid police harassment.

"I wouldn't have kept getting sick if there had been a respite care program," Cantu said.

HASSLED BY POLICE

"The shelter kicked me out at seven in the morning and I had nowhere to go. I have to keep my legs elevated and I'm not supposed to be walking, but there's laws that say you can't loiter. Nearly everywhere in Berkeley you get hassled by the police. I told them what's going on and they said, 'No you can't be hanging out here.' You have to keep moving around. So I was over-extending myself, and I got an ulcer on my toe."

The ulcer popped and Cantu went to the hospital, where they cleaned up the infection. He was again discharged to go back to the shelter, with orders to stay in bed with his feet up to keep the weight off and let them heal. But shelters are a far cry from respite care facilities, and Cantu was only allowed to stay inside during the day for one week.

Because he had to go back out on the street, his foot did not heal and he was hospitalized again. When discharged, Cantu was unable to find a place to rent, and ended up staying with his ex-wife Chloe Castorena, her current husband and their four kids in a cramped three-bedroom apartment. Chloe is a homeless service provider and she has remained committed to finding help for her ex-husband to this day. Cantu said her help has been a lifeline in the toughest times.

In May 2002, another large diabetic-related ulcer appeared on the toe of his other foot. Both ulcers became infected. Since the left great toe was also fractured, the infection got into the bone, and a doctor had to remove the infected bone, which greatly impaired his walking and balance. It took nearly six months to heal.

By October 2002, the infection had worsened because Cantu had become resistant to antibiotics after taking them for a year; so a PIC line was put in to give him intravenous antibiotics.

Living out in the cold, the pain of his arthritis and infection were terrible and the next time he was hospitalized, the doctor asked a social worker to place him somewhere. But Cantu fell through the many cracks in the health care system. He was too young to go to a nursing home, the assisted-living places were full, and the hospital didn't want to keep him because it was too expensive. So they released him again.

By now, Cantu was going in and out of the hospital every few days because the infection kept flaring up again, and it began moving up into his leg until his feet and legs were red and swollen. By January 2003, his condition had worsened so much that he was hospitalized for eight weeks at Alta Bates Hospital.

He was released in February, 2003, but again was unable to find housing he could afford. "Alameda County just doesn't have anything for me," Cantu said. "It's not affordable, and there's nowhere I can go to get help." Cantu receives $771 a month from SSI. "You can't exist on that with the rents in the Bay Area," he said.

Earlier this spring, Cantu stayed with his ex-wife Chloe Castorena and her husband again for awhile. Chloe said, "John's feet were swollen and purple and he was in a great deal of pain." Chloe and her husband have put Cantu up several times

See **Tragic Cost of Dumping Sick** *page three*

Housing Project for the Disabled Back on Track

After a bitter battle marked by mudslinging against poor and disabled people, the Oakland City Council votes for disabled housing project.

by Lynda Carson

In what turned out to be a bittersweet victory, the Oakland City Council approved funding for the 19-unit Eastmont Court housing project for the physically disabled with a 5-3 vote in favor. Many affordable housing advocates were relieved to see this bitter feud come to a close, but are not likely to forget what they observed for a long time to come.

Despite the objections of City Councilmember Desley Brooks, who did all that was possible to undermine the project, the June 3rd council vote overruled her by a slim margin. Many housing advocates now wonder why Nancy Nadel joined Councilmembers Danny Wan and Brooks in voting against the project for the disabled, since Nadel usually has been a strong advocate for affordable housing.

"Only a very sick mind could have ever dreamed up" this kind of scenario to oppose a housing project meant to assist the physically disabled, said longtime Oakland renter Mary Jones.

In an interview after the vote, Councilwoman Nancy Nadel firmly stated that she was not against affordable housing for the disabled; but was opposed to concentrated, high-density areas of the poor. Nadel said everyone knew that the developers would receive final passage for the funding of the project in its entirety; and claimed that the opponents on the council only wanted to get the message out that affordable housing projects need to be spread out across Oakland, and not just located in the flatland districts.

Whatever message Councilmembers Nadel, Wan and Brooks were trying to get across to the public, many believed that they did not have to drag the nonprofit housing developers through the mud just to send out their message.

In response to the mudslinging that has been going on ever since Brooks picked a fight with the developers, Project Manager Angela Anderson from the East Oakland Community Development Corporation (EOCDC) has worked hard to counter the vicious lies being thrown about.

In response to Brooks' accusations against the Eastmont Court project, Anderson said, "Our agency has been accused of not gaining or having community support. Neither developer would build if that were the case. When Ms. Brooks initially accused us of lying about having such support, I immediately became concerned and went back out into the community and left letters, a picture of the project and description, inviting anyone that had questions to please give us a call."

Photo by Dong LIn, from *One American Reality,* published by Cypress Press

Three members of the Oakland City Council voted against providing low-income housing for physically disabled people at a time when homeless service providers report that the number of disabled people living on the streets is growing.

Anderson said that EOCDC was very willing and eager to meet with area residents to show them the benefits that affordable housing could bring to their neighborhood. "As I canvassed over 200 homes," Anderson explained, "I spoke to the neighbors and they thought Eastmont Court was a very good idea."

Anderson gave the neighbors another important assurance. She told them, "Affordable housing does not bring down property values; in fact, it increases them. Other callers were interested in applying for a unit. I also gained signatures of over 70 people in the immediate neighborhood. That's pretty good given the ratios. The last council meeting really disappointed me because the people that spoke out in opposition couldn't be from the neighborhood that I canvassed — and I didn't miss a beat. I knocked on doors bounded by 65th Avenue, Outlook, 73rd Avenue, Bancroft and Church Streets."

Anderson eloquently described the rights of all people to have a home, including the very low-income and disabled. "The disabled, nor those in need of housing, should not be deprived of the chance to climb the ladder of living in a comfortable situation," she said. "I always believe that all people aren't born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Most of us need to rent before ultimately buying a home and some of us don't intend on buying a home at all. But the fact is, the high rent in Oakland has overwhelmed a lot of heads of households and those seeking an apartment in general.

"There are also a lot of high-density situations within the homes of many because people just can't seem to get on their feet. Jobs in the Bay Area cannot support the rapid increase of housing costs. Let's be real, the housing cost increase surprised many people, including the professionals. The attitude of Ms. Brooks is to 'pull yourself up from your bootstraps.' That is not the reality of the daily lives of Oaklanders. When people live in high density and frustration, crime rates will continue to climb. We all need to do something about it, profession by profession."

Larry Hynson, the executive director of EOCDC, challenged Brooks for saying on many occasions publicly that the addition of low-income housing in the area will discourage retailers from locating in District 6. Hynson pointed out that the *Oakland Tribune* reported on June 13 that the Eastmont Town Center plans to locate a family-run food store on a 30,000-square-feet site that will employ local residents. The *Tribune* also reported that other developments at Eastmont Mall include the renovation of 55,000 square feet of space for Alameda County to use, with several private attorneys also opening offices at the mall. Also, a drug store and athletic shoe company are ready to start their operations there.

These new developments show that the City Council's vote to locate 19 units of low-income housing for disabled people hasn't triggered the massive exodus of retailers that Brooks' warned about in the most alarmist terms. "I have said on several occasions, affordable housing can be used as a catalyst to stimulate neighborhood commercial revitalization, and EOCDC will be involved in such an effort outside of District 6 in the coming years ahead," Hynson said.

The Eastmont Court housing project for the physically disabled is a joint venture by two nonprofit housing developers: Resources for Community Development (RCD) and the East Oakland Community Development Corporation. The nearly $4 million project first began around the fall of 2000, and is expected to begin construction during October of 2003.

Dan Sawislak, executive director of RCD, stated that he looks forward to seeing the project completed so the physically disabled residents of Oakland can have a place designed to meet their needs. "I'm glad to see the battle over this project come to a close," Sawislak said.

Every year, Oakland celebrates Affordable Housing Week and showcases the high-quality housing being built in the East Bay, and demonstrates the positive difference this housing makes in lifting people out of poverty and homelessness. In maintaining her stand against affordable housing projects, Councilwoman Desley Brooks abstained from voting for this year's commemoration of Affordable Housing Week.

Street Spirit

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Tragic Cost of Dumping the Sick on the Street

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in their small apartment because they are very concerned about his health.

"Also, on the street, because he is blind and vulnerable, John often has his sleeping bag and his money stolen," Chloe said.

Cantu finally found shelter at the MASC agency in Berkeley for a short period of time in May, but then lost his place there. Chloe said that a caseworker at MASC had tried to find housing for Cantu and couldn't, even though he is legally blind and has diabetes.

"It's a sad state of affairs when there is no housing for someone who is legally blind, has diabetes and has all the other terrible health problems John has," Chloe said. "It just seems that sometimes it is the people with the greatest needs who are most overlooked." The caseworker at MASC told Chloe that there are several other people who are severely ill and/or disabled who also cannot find housing.

After losing his shelter bed at MASC, things fell completely apart for Cantu. In late May, he was found unconscious in a diabetic coma, suffering from pneumonia and another blood infection. He has been in the intensive care unit since May 28.

Cantu said people need to be warned they are only one medical crisis away from suffering everything he went through. "I just hope nobody has to go through the problems that I had," he said. "I hope that by my telling my story, somebody could do something about this and help get a house or start a hospice or a respite care facility. Perhaps someday they could be able to get a respite facility going, because something might happen to somebody they love and they would see how it is."

Cantu also faulted Alta Bates Hospital for lacking awareness of what homeless people undergo when they're discharged with no place to rest and heal and receive ongoing medical attention.

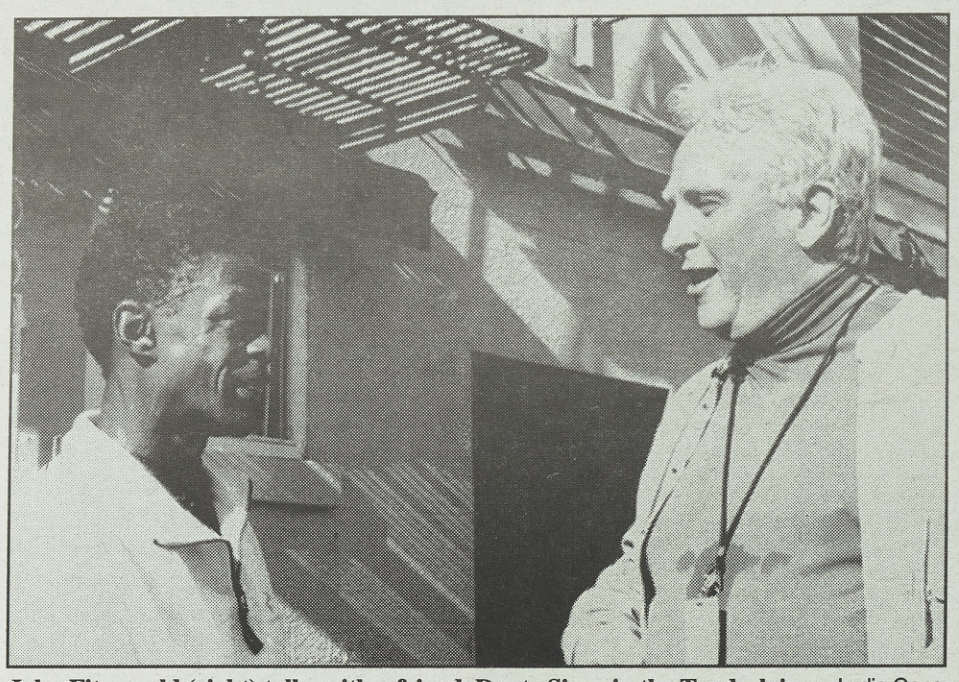
"Alta Bates wasn't set up to help homeless people," he said. "The social worker at Alta Bates wasn't too happy with my situation. At one time, she said that I was a bother because I was trying to make sure that everything was set up for me. She was trying to pass me on to other people. The places she said for me to go, I wasn't eligible for because I was too young, or I didn't have enough income, or Medi-Cal didn't cover the expenses of a rest home. Alta Bates didn't have no place for me. A shelter was it, and during the day I had nowhere to go. That was the Catch-22 and why I kept having to get rehospitalized."

Stroshane, senior planner of the BHD, gave a larger economic picture of why people fall into the double jeopardy of homelessness and health crises.

"There are at least hundreds of thousands of people in California who have no health-care coverage of any sort, public or private," Stroshane said. "Many of those people are unemployed. That means that a lot of people are really vulnerable to the economic impact of a major injury on their lives, on their households and families. The other facet of living in California is the cost of housing. Berkeley tenants have to pay a substantial amount to rent new units, particularly since the implementation of the Costa-Hawkins bill which deregulated vacant rental units. The amount that housing costs in a low-income person's budget is burdensome.

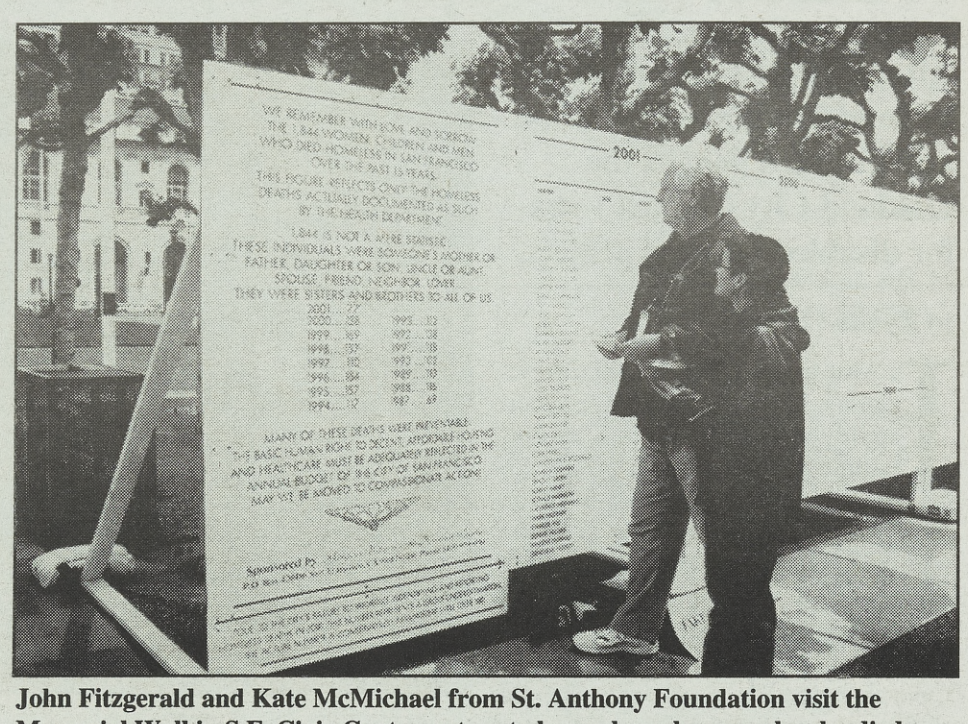
"So when you add it all up, if you're trying to make ends meet and pay for housing and your employer isn't providing you health insurance, you're at quite a bit of risk of losing housing and, if you get injured, of winding up on the street. So it's a double whammy of health care costs and housing costs."

A Dedicated Servant of the Poor and Homeless



John Fitzgerald (right) talks with a friend, Dante Sims, in the Tenderloin. Fitz is the Justice Education Coordinator at St. Anthony Foundation.

Lydia Gans photos



John Fitzgerald and Kate McMichael from St. Anthony Foundation visit the Memorial Wall in S.F. Civic Center put up to honor homeless people who died.

by Kevin McFarren

If John Fitzgerald were to tell the story of his life, he would no doubt say he had done nothing special. He would be wrong. Fitz, as he is known to his friends and acquaintances, is a rare and remarkable man. I have a confession to make: I cannot be objective in reporting about this man. No one who has ever come to know him could be objective.

When the opportunity arose for me to do a profile of Fitz, I leapt at the chance. I have known Fitz for many years. I first met him when I was a homeless wreck with nowhere to go. He was working then at the Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project. He was instrumental in getting me back on my feet after many others had given up. He never gave up on me (although he would sigh sometimes).

His insight into the problems facing those of us who were homeless was (and still is) inspiring. Having been raised Catholic, I was a little leery of those who had been affiliated with the Church. I could not have been more wrong. By example, he taught me the meaning of the verse, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

Fitz personifies the term, "Renaissance man." He loves the arts, especially music, both as a performer and as a patron. His devotion to the opera, for example, is legendary among those privileged enough to know him. I was awestruck when he told me he was going to stand in the rear of the War Memorial Opera House through Wagner's "Ring Series" because seats were "too expensive." It is unfortunate in our society that nonprofit positions, especially those involving care for the poor and homeless, cannot pay what they should. Many of those opera patrons with season orchestra seats and boxes at the opera go to be seen, not to enjoy the music. Fitz goes because of his love for the music.

Fitz knows there are things in this world far more valuable than money. A longtime friend and colleague, Fr. Bill Wack, tells a story about how inspirational Fitz can be. He wrote: "He gave us a great retreat on the vow of poverty once. I was so taken by his words and conviction that I went up to my room... and threw away a bunch of my stuff. Then I (proudly) told what I had done. Instead of congratulating me, he said, 'You damned fool! You need that stuff. That's not what I was talking about!' (He had been trying to stress a spiritual poverty but I took it literally — and still do!)"

Fitz was ordained at Notre Dame into the Congregation of the Holy Cross. Even at Notre Dame, he showed his desire to help and guide others with his work with the Campus Ministry. After Notre Dame, he went to Chicago, where he taught high school students for seven years.

About two decades ago, Fitz founded Andre House, a multi-service center in Phoenix, Arizona, that is still going strong. Fr. Wack, who is now the director, said: "People here at Andre House remember Fitz as a man who really cares about them and believes we can make a difference in the world through small, even trivial, things. People feel *listened to* when they have an encounter with him, and they really appreciate that. The thing that I learned from Fitz is humility and joy."

Fitz was influenced in his concern for the poor and homeless by the example of Dorothy Day, who pioneered the Catholic Worker Movement. Her concept of "hospitality houses" was radical for its day. That the poor and homeless could find welcome, as well as food and respite in a comfortable, safe environment, was novel. It laid the groundwork for the drop-ins, food programs and shelters that try to serve the ever-growing poor and homeless population today. Fitz summarized her beliefs by saying that because of Easter, no one has a right to sit around feeling hopeless.

Wendy Georges formerly served as Multi-Service Center director at the Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project and knew Fitz from his work in the community. When he became available, she hired him immediately. He took on so many tasks, no one could come up with a title for him. Wendy said, "Whatever needed to be done, he did it, he did it."

She gave an example of his dedication. Each Sunday, after attending Mass at Newman Hall in Berkeley, he would stop by the Food Project location at the Trinity United Methodist Church. He would prepare the coffee urns and set them on a timer, so when the Drop-In opened the next morning, the coffee would be ready. No one asked him to do it. He just felt it should be done. When asked about it, he shrugged and said, "Well, I was in the neighborhood anyway..."

Wendy said that his values are so deeply embedded in who he is that those values reverberate from his every action. She fondly remembers telling him, at the end of the work week, "Go home!" because, for him, the work was never done.

As Fitz helped me get back on my feet, troubles at the Food Project reached a crisis level. Internal politics got in the way of the organization's goal of providing services to those of us who were most in need. The guiding light, Wendy Georges, was forced to leave. Fitz, in good conscience and in solidarity with Wendy, walked away. Many of the clients were devastated. We staged protests, wrote letters, to no avail. Our best, most trusted advocates were gone. Several clients left the program as well.

While Fitz regretted leaving his clients, he had little doubt we would continue to receive the services we needed. He had to take a position and make a statement that internal politics should not interfere with providing services to those who need them. (After some turbulent times at the Food Project, Annie Perry is now very competently supervising day-to-day operations).

Fitz continues to serve the community with his energy and compassion. He served on the board of directors of Elizabeth House, an East Bay "hospitality house" along the lines of Dorothy Day's ideals. When other responsibilities caused him to relinquish that position, it was passed on to none other than Wendy Georges.

Currently, he is the Justice Education Coordinator at St. Anthony Foundation in San Francisco. I know he is as giving and caring as ever. Last year, Katie Burke, as a law student at USF, took part in the Tenderloin Immersion Project which Fitz helps to coordinate. She wrote in *Street Spirit*: "Fitz is a very warm and compassionate man who speaks from his heart...."

Gary Hough, staff member at St. Anthony Foundation, is technically Fitz's supervisor. He will gladly volunteer that Fitz is not one to be "supervised." Fitz is, however, supervising a program called the Youth Council through the St. Anthony Foundation. Hough says it is an important project for Fitz. Julie Wong, a St. Anthony Foundation staff member who works with Fitz, said the program's goal is to engage high school students to learn about homelessness and, particularly, who each homeless person is. Fitz wants to educate young people about social justice and encourage them to empower themselves to bring about change in the way our society treats the poor and homeless.

Throughout his life, Fitz has worked to encourage young people to become involved in community affairs. Wally Mikula, the Campus Minister at Moreau Catholic High School in Hayward, has a great respect for Fitz as he treats both the students and the homeless they encounter with "dignity and respect."

Fitz also volunteers at a wonderful nonprofit organization called Loaves and Fishes, which, appropriately, feeds people, and serves them beautifully. Having been homeless, I have eaten many free meals, and Loaves and Fishes sets the standard. The meal where I see Fitz is at Newman Hall, the Campus Ministry at UC Berkeley, the first Saturday of every month. Tickets are given out at 10:00 a.m. It is the best ticket in town.

As a great coincidence, another hard-working volunteer is the Hon. Tom Reardon. Tom and Fitz were at Notre Dame together. Now they work hard together, with many other volunteers, to provide a wonderful experience, great food, entertainment and fellowship. Tom Reardon is now a Superior Court judge in Alameda County, and was also very helpful in putting this profile together. Oddly, as wonderful as the food is, I do not recall Fitz ever sitting down to eat. Perhaps he is too busy taking care of the rest of us.

Fitz worked for the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and admired the ideals for which he stood. After Robert Kennedy's assassination, his brother, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, ended his eulogy: "As he said many times, in many parts of this nation, to those he touched and who sought to touch him: 'Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not,' "

Those words could easily apply to Fitz.

Saint Boniface Church Reopens

by Lynda Cobden

In the hollow shell of the sanctuary,
in the penetrating semi-darkness,
peace and grace are magnified
to worshipping souls.
It is a beacon in the Tenderloin like
1,000 rays of light beckoning believers.
Words come to mind,
"Come to me all who are weary and
heavy laden. I shall give you rest."
In the quiet peace of the sanctuary,
close to God, our cares melt.
We leave with a full, peaceful heart.
People stand in line next door at
Saint Anthony's to obtain healthy,
nutritious, energizing food.
Some seek casual work or shelter.
The Franciscans in their long brown
robes assist and without words
their garb and countenance speaks:
"Come to me all who are weary and
heavy laden. I shall give you rest."
This is a church of the street.
We pick up our yoke
which is ever so much lighter now
and carry on, carry on.

Sometimes, Even For...

by Claire J. Baker

sometimes a rainbow for
ignored pencil sellers,
for bag ladies lugging
heavy loads all alone;

for underpass dwellers,
homeless hidden in groves
of trees and silent pleas;

even for the hungry, dispossessed,
the seldom blessed —

sometimes a reainbow,
colors sliding off
both ends.

'Call to Action' Protects Vital Services in the East Bay

Effective organizing saves virtually all East Bay homeless and hunger programs—at least for the moment.

by Terry Messman

Many agencies serving the homeless and hungry in the East Bay recently banded together with a new resolve to fight what might be called "trickle-down poverty" from above. The federal government greatly expanded the military budget to wage the war on Iraq, and the Bush administration is trying to make drastic cuts in social services. On the state level, Gov. Davis is still wrestling with an estimated $38 billion budget deficit. Closer to home, Alameda County is grappling with its own enormous deficit, considerably more than $100 million.

At the beginning of June, agencies serving homeless and hungry people were so concerned about the potentially devastating impact of this trickle-down poverty, that 54 organizations joined together in a "Call to Action" coalition to fight the looming cutbacks in housing, food and hunger programs.

On June 3, "Call to Action" organized a march of about 250 people from Oakland's First Unitarian Church nearly a mile down 14th Street to the Alameda County Administration Building, enthusiastically chanting every step of the way, "Homes Not Jails, Food Not Bombs."

One of the first speakers at the June 3rd rally, a Vietnam veteran who works with homeless people, solemnly intoned: "Every time a government agency has a budget deficit, it's always balanced on the backs of those who can least afford it — the poor and the homeless."

But this year may be the rarest of rare exceptions when the backbreaking cuts don't fall on the backs of the poor. For some highly visible community organizing by agencies serving the hungry and homeless resulted in some conscientious actions by elected officials who resolutely refused to balance the budget by slashing lifeline services to the poor.

Even though massive cutbacks in their own governmental operations will have to be made, both Alameda County and Berkeley officials preserved the budgets of virtually all the housing, food and homeless service providers. In what some advocates called a nearly miraculous turnaround, the devastating cuts in the safety net that were feared in early June were entirely avoided.

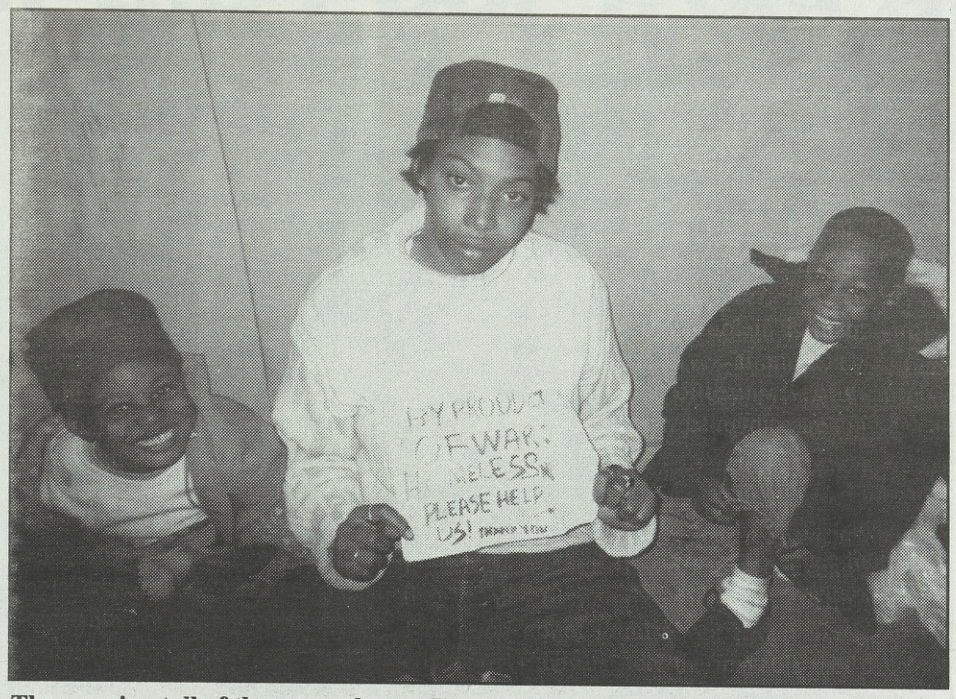
EFFECTIVE ORGANIZING

Effective community organizing was essential to preserving these programs. The bulk of the organizing that created the "Call to Action" protest on June 3 was carried out by four agencies: BOSS (Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency) Operation Dignity, St. Mary's Center and the Alameda County Food Bank.

BOSS showed real leadership by creating an effective coalition that united the homeless community and the service providers in protest and lobbying efforts.

BOSS stepped in to fill the gap created when the Emergency Services Network (ESN) went out of business. ESN, a long-standing network of service providers in Alameda County, formerly had been the key group doing advocacy on the issues of hunger and homelessness. With ESN having closed its doors, the leadership gap had to be filled immediately, so BOSS stepped forward and began mobilizing against the threatened cuts several months ago.

Interviewed at the end of June, BOSS Executive Director boona cheema said, "Six weeks ago, it looked like the community-based organizations that provide services to the homeless were going to get deep cuts. With the organizing we've been doing with almost 60 other community-based organizations, this year it seems like we've been able to keep the supervisors from making those cuts."



The growing toll of the war at home. The homeless woman's sign says: "Byproduct of War, Homelessness. Please Help Us!" Photo by Jahahara Alkebulan-Maiat

"I will join with you every single time to raise our voices to say that our country is going in the wrong direction, and that we need to take care of people at home at this time."
— Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson

Dozens of organizations pulled together for a well-timed round of lobbying and protest. "Having the rally at that time was a very smart thing to do," cheema said. Some of the staff of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors told rally organizers that it was very important for them to see people turn out in force to support hunger and homeless programs.

"We know that organizing works," cheema said. "And I think that organizations that, in the past, were much more engaged in advocacy and organizing on the streets are slowly going to come back into the movement."

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson told the protest gathering, "I'm really glad to see all of you out here today. I'm sorry we're out here for the reasons we are, but this kind of activism is what's needed — not only in Alameda County but across this country."

Carson was loudly cheered by rally participants for his long support for poor people's issues. Rally organizers said that Supervisor Carson and Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker had been instrumental in preserving the threatened programs.

Carson vowed, "The Board of Supervisors is committed to making sure that we continue to deal with our obligations to oversee, as best as we can, the health, the safety and the welfare of all the citizens of Alameda County."

Suzan Bateson, executive director of the Alameda County Community Food Bank, said there were no cuts in her agency's contract. That is good news for hunger-relief efforts in the East Bay, because the Food Bank serves about 120,000 people each month through a network of 300 providers. The Food Bank also runs a hotline where people can call to find out where they can get food from a pantry or a meal from a soup kitchen. (Their hotline number is 800-870-FOOD.)

Bateson said, "The Alameda County Supervisors were all very concerned about preserving basic services in the community. They've all been great. I think that they recognized that basic needs need to be met and I think they really kept their eyes on preserving these services for the community, knowing how important and critical that they are. So I give them a lot of credit."

THE WAR AT HOME

At the June 3rd rally, Carson warned the demonstrators that the federal government has over a $300 billion deficit and that it also spends more than $300 billion on the military every year. Since the State of California and Alameda County get large portions of their budgets from the federal government, the federal deficit and uncontrolled military spending will be felt deeply in the East Bay.

"While our country has been looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, our country has really been at war at home," Carson said. "There are weapons of mass destruction in our community. Our country spends $38 billion a month on the Department of Defense and 50 percent of our dollars go to the military."

The federal government fails to spend anywhere near that much on child care, housing and medical care. Carson called that failure a "weapon of mass destruction right here in our own community."

Supervisor Carson then saluted the demonstrators for coming to the administration building in protest and pledged to be with them at future actions.

"You have every right to be in front of this building and demand that we do our jobs to try to keep all of the programs as operational as possible," he said. "You have to continue to have these kinds of ongoing actions on a regular basis so that other people who are not here will get your message loud and clear, and understand that the weapons of mass destruction are right here, that the war is going on right in our community. I will join with you every single time to raise our voices to say that our country is going in the wrong direction, and that we need to take care of people at home at this time."

BERKELEY SAVES HUMAN SERVICES

Berkeley City Councilmember Kriss Worthington told the June 3rd rally, "We have progressive politicians in Berkeley and progressive politicians in Alameda County and we need to demand that each of our local elected officials don't act like George Bush. We need to save our safety net in Berkeley and Alameda County."

In late June, Berkeley officials did exactly that by passing a budget that spared virtually all the homeless and hunger programs that had been slated for major cuts only a few weeks earlier.

Berkeley's food programs and homeless services were looking at cuts of $300,000 only six weeks ago. BOSS took the lead in creating the Berkeley Community Coalition (BCC), which brought together 30 organizations to work with Mayor Tom Bates in an attempt to stave off the threatened cuts to housing, food and homeless programs.

The BCC first came together for the Mayor's Sleep-Out on April 22, and then began meeting with Mayor Bates and the Berkeley City Council to save housing, homeless and food programs. Bates fully restored the budget for community-based organizations serving the poor.

According to cheema, Bates was amazingly responsive. "I am so glad that he is Berkeley's mayor, because if it had been anyone else right now, we would be looking at chipping away at the safety net. They would have decimated it — I know it."

"Under Tom Bates," she added, "I'm confident that the last programs to be touched will be the programs that feed the hungry and house the homeless. He's made a real commitment to that. He gets it. He came out of the Assembly and was a major proponent of creating programs for the mentally disabled."

THE THREAT REMAINS

But cheema warned that even though homeless services have been spared for the moment, there is apprehension over the deep cuts that will be made in Alameda County's health and mental health services, programs which homeless people also depend upon. Though the budget is still in flux, there could be roughly $30 million in cuts in health care and another $30 million or more of in-house cuts to County Social Services.

As poverty increases and health clinics and other services are shut down, there will be an increased burden on the service providers who are still standing. "We really won't know the impact for about six months as the effect of the cuts start hitting the community," said cheema. "Even though homeless providers were spared, that doesn't mean we're not going to have a lot more people looking for our services."

Food Bank Director Suzan Bateson said that even prior to the latest budget cuts, the ability of food providers to meet the growing need was already in danger in Alameda County. Two years ago, she said, the Food Bank made about 300 referrals a month on their hotline. In April 2003, they made 900 referrals to individuals trying to find food assistance, a three-fold increase in need.

Bateson said the increase in hunger is directly correlated with the economic downturn in the past two years. The rising need for food assistance ran so closely parallel to the economic downturn, she said, that it was "just like watching a bar graph of the economy falter."

"We're already in crisis," Bateson said. "People who access our food are working poor people, primarily. Forty-three percent of our emergency food recipients are children, so their parents are underemployed and they're at risk of hunger. So we've already seen the repercussions of this dreadful economy."

Also, even though one budgetary bullet has been dodged, the state budget cuts are still to come and could have a very damaging impact on services in the East Bay. Even programs that have been spared may not be able to dodge bullets forever.

"All this could go up in smoke if the state budget comes out worse than we think," cheema said. "Every proposed cut would be back on the table. So it's still a very fluid situation, and nobody's celebrating yet."

COPWATCH Organizes Against Police Misconduct

by Lydia Gans

Most of us were taught in school that the police are our friends, and that their job is to make sure the laws are observed in the interests of community safety and happiness. For many, real life soon teaches a very different lesson.

Andrea Pritchett, founding member of COPWATCH and its very articulate spokesperson, explains, "What the police do is they enforce the rules of the game. Now, if the game is fundamentally unfair, then there's no way the police are going to come out looking good. They can be the rule-keeper for this game in which those that have more get more, and those that haven't get less."

All too often, those who have less — minorities, the poor, the homeless — find themselves victims rather than beneficiaries of police actions. Police officers will roust homeless people sleeping on benches or seeking shelter in doorways, and make them move someplace else when they clearly have no better place to go.

Or the routine escalates, and the officer writes a citation which the victim will ignore, having no money to pay the fine anyway. A bench warrant is issued, so the next time the homeless person is confronted by the police, he or she ends up being arrested and sent to jail. Upon release from jail, the whole routine starts over again.

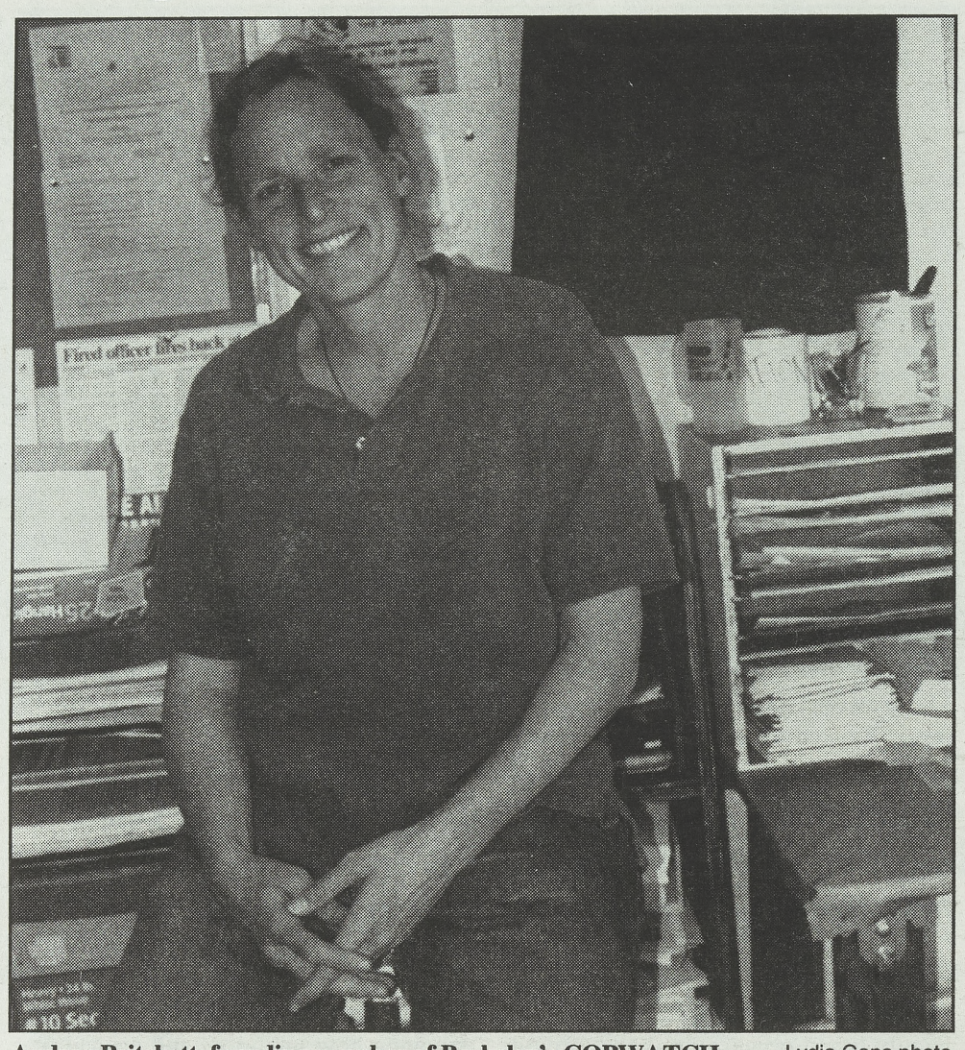
The Berkeley-based COPWATCH runs classes and passes out cards to people on the streets informing them of what their rights are. In the case of people who are homeless, it is clear that these rights are frequently and flagrantly being violated.

"Sadly, those rights are violated because the police know that they can, for the most part, get away with it," Pritchett explains. "*Homeless people are often illegally detained and illegally investigated.* Without reasonable suspicion to believe that a homeless person had actually committed a crime, they will be stopped, identified."

The balance of power is so unequal that even though their rights are being violated, many homeless people choose to be nonconfrontational, and hope that by being submissive they won't be harassed.

"When you're homeless, it's a whole different situation because you're so vulnerable," Pritchett said. "I talk to a lot of homeless people who feel it's more of a priority to maintain a positive, friendly rapport with officers in the hopes that the officer won't bust their camp, won't follow them around, won't do some of the things that some of the officers do."

Whether this does any good is not clear. "I think there's some levels of harassment that are up to the individual cop, but I think for the most part the officers are given orders," she said. "Here at the UC, it's the end of summer. The new students and their parents are in town. A lot of times you can predict that there's going to be a sweep of the streets."



Andrea Pritchett, founding member of Berkeley's COPWATCH. Lydia Gans photo

Pritchett expressed serious concern about a new tactic being implemented by police and city agencies. "The new tactic they've used is this idea of the multi-agency task force," she said. "This notion that, 'hey, it's very holistic, we're all working together on coordinated city services.' But what that has meant for homeless people on the Avenue and around the city is that they're going to use police officers to ticket you for littering if they see a chip bag by your feet. They're going to get animal control out there to investigate whether or not your dog is properly licensed and vaccinated. They're going to use street sweeping to make it uncomfortable for you to remain on the city sidewalk.

"They're using mental health workers to come up and say, 'Hey how're you doing today? Shall we 5150 you, put a psychiatric hold on you?' So that's their notion. Unfortunately, all of that adds up to no net gain for the homeless people. It's not really a sincere effort to help anybody, but to sweep the streets of the appearance of poverty."

COPWATCH was started in Berkeley 13 years ago and the concept has spread to a number of other cities. COPWATCH volunteers are on the streets functioning as a buffer between the police and the public. Watching and recording incidents of harassment and brutality provides a deterrence to unacceptable police behavior, especially if necessary complaints are filed and lawsuits are initiated.

People from the community and students who volunteer to be COPWATCHers are trained in the applicable laws and in methods of recording and reporting incidents of police misbehavior. They spend their three-hour shifts in the streets being available to the people, making sure they know their rights, and observing and recording police behavior.

But there is more to the COPWATCH philosophy than trying to control police behavior and empower people to assert their rights. In our society, usually the first reaction to a problem is to call the cops, even though it is clear that in poor neighborhoods, police are more likely to exacerbate the situation than to be of help. COPWATCH volunteers try to defuse confrontational situations, encourage people to look out for each other, and educate the public to deal with problems cooperatively without calling on the police.

A broader goal is to work toward building alternative social structures to deal with social problems. "There are some beautiful examples," Andrea Pritchett says. She talks about restorative justice as is practiced in Native American societies, about community justice, and the conflict resolution which is done by some community agencies.

"Let's look at crime," she says. "What causes crime? How many calls for service do the police make because somebody stole something? Well, why are people stealing things? That's crime prevention. Calls for domestic violence. Isn't that something the family can take care of? And counselors? A lot of times the woman is getting mashed by the guy. Domestic violence situations are very explosive, the worst kind for police to respond to. What's not happening? How do we prevent domestic violence? We can co-opt a lot of this stuff through effective organizing in our communities and consciousness-raising and teaching people conflict resolution skills."

This is not to say that we don't need a system of justice; but it can be quite different from what we currently have. There is the example of South Africa after the dismantling of the apartheid government's law enforcement institutions.

"You need justice, like you need love and trust," Pritchett says. "That's what makes a society nice. You need justice. So what happens if the people create their own forms of justice? And it was interesting, rather than having this adversarial defense/prosecution kind of system, it was like a circle — the truth and justice commissions. Their whole notion of what feels like justice, is different than ours.

"I challenge people: Look at the so-called justice system we have. Show me the justice. All those resources, all that time, all that money. It's like playing a slot machine — how you get sentenced, who gets caught, who gets blamed. I encourage people to consider something called community control. I look at America. We're so hungry for justice, we're starving, and all they give us is cops." Pritchett insists that it is not a COPWATCH principle to hate the police. "I am concerned that the role they are playing in society, in our town, is not really helping people."

In the current economic and political situation, with vast sums of money going to the military instead of human needs here at home, and a political climate of fear and suspicion, police behavior becomes more oppressive. What is happening is that "the city government, rather than provide housing, rather than provide for the basic needs of people, tries to suppress the symptoms of our economic decay when asking police to go and disperse homeless people."

So Pritchett and the dedicated COPWATCH volunteers will continue to defend people against police aggression while holding out the dream of a more just society.

Street Spirit — A Partnership Between AFSC and BOSS

AFSC
American Friends Service Committee

Street Spirit is a publication of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). AFSC was founded by Quakers in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors an opportunity to aid civilian victims during World War I. Today it carries on programs of service, social justice, and peace education in 22 foreign countries and 43 areas in the United States.

In 1947, the AFSC and Friends Service of Britain together received the Nobel Peace Prize for their "silent help from the nameless to the nameless." AFSC seeks to address the root causes of poverty, injustice, and war. We are called to confront, nonviolently, powerful institutions of oppression, violence and injustice.

The AFSC believes that people can change the world. Once we get involved, we tend to stay: 45 years with farm workers in the Central Valley, 50 years in the California prison system, 50 years with the American Indian community, 17 years with homeless people in the Bay Area, 30 years working for Middle East peace with Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

To contact AFSC call: (415) 565-0201
American Friends Service Committee
65 Ninth St. San Francisco, CA 94103

BOSS
Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency

The *Street Spirit* vendor program is managed by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS). BOSS was founded in 1971 to serve the deinstitutionalized mentally disabled. Over the years, the organization added programs to serve all homeless and poor people.

Today BOSS operates 30 programs in Berkeley, Oakland, and Hayward serving 3,000 families and individuals each year. Our work targets four outcomes — affordable housing, improved health, economic security, and social justice.

BOSS pursues its mission in two ways:

(1) Providing comprehensive services to help people gain independence — shelters, housing, education, training, employment, health and mental health care, youth and family services; and

(2) Attacking the root causes of poverty and homelessness through policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, community planning, and fighting to include the voice of poor people in designing implementing solutions.

For more information, call (510) 649-1930 or visit http://www.self-sufficiency.org. If you need housing or services, please call (510) 843-3700.

Exodus of the Poor from an Oasis

by Joan Clair

Picadilly Circus, a health food store on University Avenue formerly named Wild Oats, has been about as "small town," in the positive sense, as it gets in Berkeley. I've been acquainted with one of the people who works there for 23 years. It's a place where I'd run into friends on a regular basis, one of whom called the old Wild Oats "an oasis."

But it's an oasis no more, at least not for me. It feels more like a piece of desert turf whose soul has been surgically removed. Although Wild Oats/Picadilly Circus has a history of being in conflict with homeless and semi-homeless street solicitors, it bottomed out for me when I found that Charles McElroy had been arrested in front of the store a few months ago for "obstructing a business."

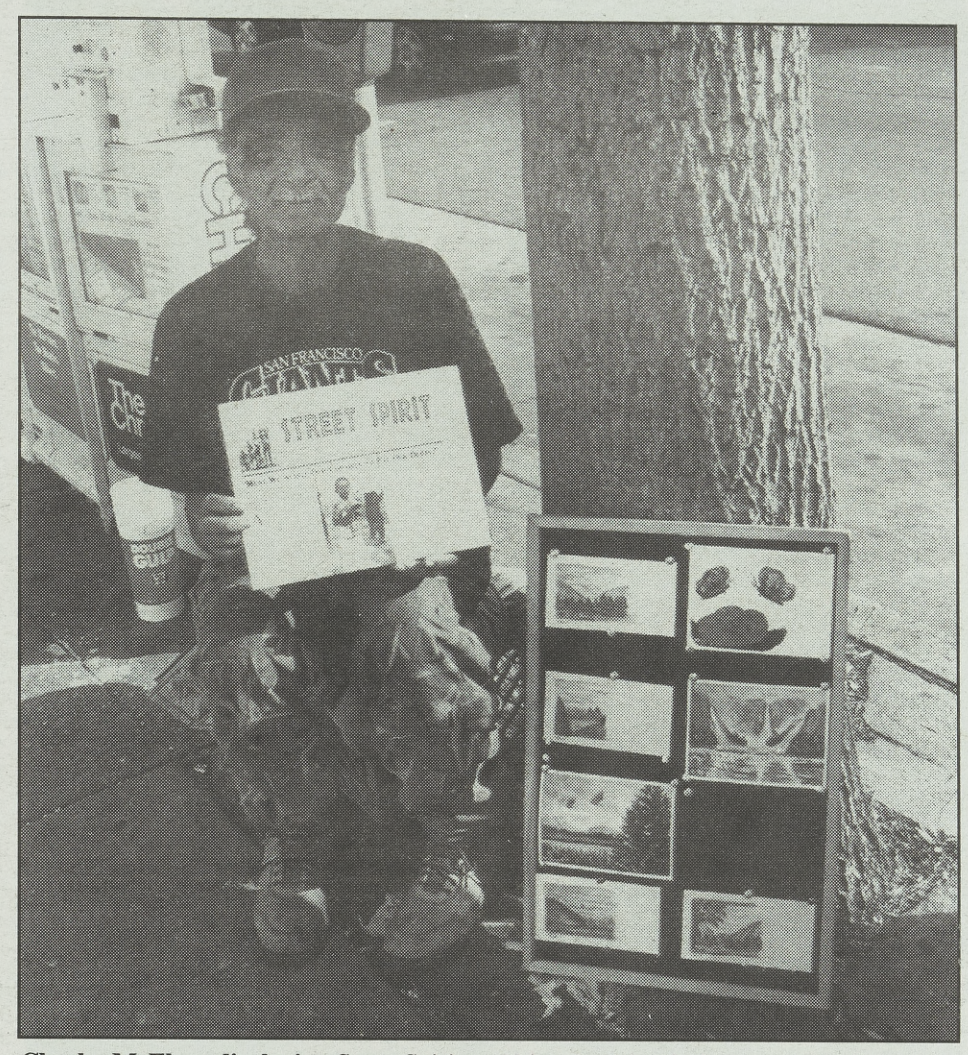
As noted in *Street Spirit's* initial article about Charles McElroy ["Wild Oats Market Bans Ailing Homeless Artist," December 1999], the first action against the homeless by Wild Oats came back in October 1997 in the form of a "large anti-homeless sign asking customers not to share food or give money to persons outside Wild Oats." Then, in December 1999, Terry Messman reported how Charles McElroy, along with other homeless solicitors, was banned from entering the store and from sitting in front of Wild Oats to sell *Street Spirit* and his art.

The management at that time confirmed that Charles McElroy had never caused a problem. Rather, he was being swept away by an indiscriminate ban aimed at removing all homeless people from the store's premises, whether they had caused a problem or not.

Although the ban was lifted, as reported in the February 2000 issue of *Street Spirit* [see "One Among Many: Charles McElroy," by Joan Clair], the actions against the homeless outside of Wild Oats did not stop there. Because one customer had filed a complaint with the police department against one of the "beggars" outside of Wild Oats, a police officer for that beat told all the "beggars" they had to leave and could not return. Once again, the complaint was not against Charles McElroy; yet he was driven away in the indiscriminate targeting of all homeless people.

And now, to bring this story of one store's campaign against the homeless up to the present, the crackdown by Picadilly Circus has grown even more intolerant.

Charles McElroy said in an interview in late June: "A week before my first ticket, the manager came out of the store to stop officers on bikes passing by. He made a complaint about my sitting there. The officers gave me a verbal warning and said I had to leave.



Charles McElroy displaying *Street Spirit* and his colorful paintings. Lydia Gans photo

There is no room for the needy, the marginal and abandoned unless they are in a painting hanging on the wall of a museum or in a production of *Les Misérables*. There, the destitute and impoverished are appreciated as art. Their appearances are acceptable as long as they are not alive.

"Then, in the week of March 17, 2003, I got two tickets. The first time, Officer Onciano and his partner came up to me on bikes. They came from opposite directions and came up on either side of me as if I had robbed a bank, attracting all this attention from the people who were around. They stopped so fast that their brakes made a loud noise. It was like they were playing cops and robbers. Officer Onciano gave me a ticket saying I was sitting on a chair obstructing the sidewalk. I never blocked the store's entrance or obstructed the sidewalk. I was sitting on a stool which was always back to the curb."

Later on in that same week, McElroy received another citation for "obstructing a business operation." McElroy said he had only been in front of Picadilly Circus for a few minutes with Kenny Williams, another street solicitor, when two women cops came up in a car. Charlie McElroy and Kenny Williams were arrested and taken to jail, where McElroy was cited out because of his medical problems. The District Attorney did not charge McElroy in this case.

According to McElroy, "The lady cop said she got a call complaining about my being out there. The call had to have been from the manager. Who else could it have come from?"

McElroy decided not to go back to Picadilly Circus. However, in early April, after he got the second citation, he dropped by the store just to use the restroom and to meet a customer who he hoped would help him bring some of his things to a storage place. According to McElroy, a police officer (Badge #128) stopped him when he came out of the store and said that the store personnel had called and made a complaint. McElroy said that the officer told him that, according to the complaint, he was disturbing the customers. However, McElroy said, he had not even been selling *Street Spirit* or his art outside the store.

With the support of Osha Neumann, an attorney with the Suitcase Clinic, McElroy pleaded not guilty to the first citation. A court date was set for June 4, 2003. Neumann came to court that day as McElroy's attorney, along with several members of the Suitcase Clinic.

Frank Wilderson, an art teacher, and this reporter showed up to testify on McElroy's behalf. In all the years I shopped at Wild Oats/Picadilly Circus while Charlie was there, I never once saw him blocking a sidewalk or obstructing the store entrance. And I had dropped by the store two or three times a week during the years Charlie was outside.

Since the police officer who cited McElroy never showed up in court, the case was dismissed. Neumann said he was concerned because he had been told by the police captain who supervised Officer Onciano, the officer in question, that there were circumstances that justified giving the ticket.

"I thought in that case it was surprising the officer did not show up in court," Neumann said. "Ordinance 14.48.020 ['Obstructions on streets and sidewalks'], the ordinance under which Charlie was cited, is an ordinance that is supposed to be used against people who leave trash on the sidewalk. It was never intended to criminalize *Street Spirit* vendors who need to sit while they're doing their job. The fact that the officer did not show up deprived Charlie of the opportunity to prove that he was improperly cited."

It's strange to think that in our "oasis" of Berkeley there are those who feel safer when street solicitors and homeless people are out of the way. In late June, I passed by Picadilly Circus at a time when Charlie and Larry usually would have been there and saw no solicitors.

For some people, there is no room in their landscape for the needy, the marginal and abandoned unless they are in a painting hanging on the wall of a museum or in a production of *Les Misérables*. There, the destitute and impoverished are appreciated as art. Their appearances are acceptable as long as they are not alive.

McElroy has received one more ticket in a new location he found after his exodus from Picadilly Circus. He was cited once again for sitting on a "wooden stool/chair on a sidewalk." As I interviewed Charlie about this, outside the Wells Fargo Bank on Solano Avenue in Berkeley, he pointed out the absurdity of being cited again for sitting on a stool after the first citation was dismissed.

"It's harassment," he said. As I was interviewing him, a woman named Carol passed by who had purchased one of his art works. She thanked him, saying, "The painting makes me happy every day."

Food Stamp Bill and Senior Meal Programs Need Support

Food Stamp Legislation (AB 231) Needs Your Support

The Alameda County Community Food Bank has been monitoring an important bill that would reduce many barriers to families applying for food stamps. Assembly Bill 231, introduced by Daryl Steinberg (D-Sacramento), will not only help low-income families by eliminating the finger-imaging requirement, auto resource limit and face-to-face interview requirement, but it will also bring money to the state.

Currently, families requesting food stamps must have every adult in the household, even those who are working or disabled, go to the benefits office to get fingerprinted. This process is a time-consuming, intrusive barrier that prevents many from receiving the help they need. The system was designed to prevent fraud, but a recent study by the State Auditor reports that during a two-year period, the finger-imaging system found only 45 cases of fraud out of a caseload of almost 2 million people. Eliminating this requirement would save the State $11 million per year and ensure eligible families receive food stamps.

The governor also has the opportunity to bring another $70 million in federal money for food assistance by investing $2.5 million. Thanks to a new law signed by the president last year, people transitioning from welfare to work can receive food stamp benefits for five months.

The initial state investment is needed to set up the new benefits, but the benefits themselves come from the federal government and would generate new income for California grocers, farmers and the entire food industry. Gov. Gray Davis should join Gov. George Pataki of New York and several other states in offering transitional benefits to people moving from welfare to work.

Funding for Senior Brown Bag Program Threatened

"Abating Hunger Among the Elderly" is a new study that documents the extent and impact of hunger among seniors using the Brown Bag Program in Alameda County. Gov. Davis has threatened to cut funding for this critical statewide program which serves about 40,000 low-income seniors at more than 600 community sites in California.

The Alameda County Food Bank, St. Mary's Center and U.C. Berkeley School of Social Welfare surveyed 137 seniors participating in the Mercy Brown Bag Program in Alameda County. We are asking legislators not to cut funding for this and other senior nutrition programs.

For a copy of the study visit www.accfb.org.

AB 231 and the Senior Brown Bag Program Needs Your Help!

Please let Gov. Davis know you support AB 231 and the Senior Brown Bag Program. Contact his office at:

State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-445-2841
Fax: 916-445-4633
governor@governor.ca.gov

Chinatown Evictions

from page one

since receiving her eviction notice. Wen Hom has resided at the Plaza for the past eight years after being evicted by an owner move-in eviction, said Art Hom. He added that his mother's imminent eviction from the Plaza is a total surprise because none of the renters were informed about the 10-year, short-term affordable housing deal made with the City, which has now come to such a distressing end.

Oakland activists charge that wealthy hotel magnate Lawrence Chan pulled the plug on 50 affordable units at the Plaza after exploiting the City of Oakland for a $7.5 million loan which was never repaid.

Before Chan declared that he wanted this interview to be off the record, he bluntly told this reporter that he believed that he had a fiduciary duty to evict the low-income tenants so he could sell off the units as market-rate condominiums.

The Pacific Renaissance Plaza opened in 1993, and included a 10-year contract to keep 50 of the 250 newly built condos as set-aside affordable housing units as part of the deal between the City of Oakland and Larry Chan. The 10-year contract expired in April 2003, and Chan wasted no time in attacking the tenants residing in the 50 affordable units.

Larry Chan is the founder and CEO of Park Lane Hotels International and C&L Financial, Inc., which developed the Pacific Renaissance Plaza. Chan's company, the International Hotelier Management Corporation, served the eviction notices to the affected renters.

The Pacific Renaissance Plaza is a mixed-use development with 1.2 million square feet of retail, residential, and commercial space. In addition to the 50 units of affordable housing, the development included a high-rise tower with 200 condos, Oakland's Asian Cultural Center, stores and restaurants, the Chinatown library branch, plus an underground garage large enough for nearly 850 vehicles.

The City of Oakland spent $2 million for the library and Asian Cultural Center, and spent another $11 million towards the ownership of 500 parking spaces in the underground garage. According to city officials, C&L Financial also received a $7.5 million loan to finance the rest of the project, which was never paid back.

Larry Chan resides in Hillsborough, CA, and is a very wealthy man with political connections ranging from George Bush Senior to Senator Phil Gram. Chan was a member of the White House Board of Advisors on Private Sector Initiatives under President George Bush. As the President and CEO of Park Lane Hotels International, Chan owns a string of Marriot Hotels stretching from Oakland and San Jose to New York City.

Young activists stand up and fight for the rights of their elders. Lydia Gans photo

On June 12, about 100 demonstrators gathered in front of the Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel in San Francisco, also owned by Chan, to protest the elderly evictions occurring in Oakland, during a meeting of the Hong Kong Association of Northern California. Chan is a board member of the Hong Kong Association.

'GREEDY LANDLORDS'

At that protest, Vivian Chang, of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), declared that the City of Oakland needs to be responsible for the renters, especially the frail and elderly ones, to make sure that "they all don't end up being tossed out upon the streets by greedy landlords!" Vivian Chang said that Larry Chan overcharged the renters at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza by as much as $300 per month, and that Chan never paid back a penny of the $7.5 million loaned to him by the City of Oakland.

APEN opened its doors in 1993 in an effort to build community power for poor people. APEN Organizing Director Vivian Chang charged that Larry Chan refused to meet with the community in an effort to avert the planned evictions.

A new nine-page report submitted to the Oakland City Council on June 24 by the "Stop the Chinatown Evictions Committee" revealed that Chan overcharged the renters at the Plaza by $2.2 million in the past 10 years. The report also documented that Chan violated the terms of his contract by failing to pay back the $7.5 million loan and also failed to pay another $9.1 million in interest owed to the City of Oakland.

The coalition is pushing for better city monitoring of the affordable housing deals that become ticking time bombs of displacement for low-income renters.

Vivian Chang of APEN gave much of the credit to Margaretta Lin of the East Bay Community Law Center for having the crucial information about what went wrong with the deal made by the City of Oakland and Larry Chan.

Margaretta Lin stated that Chan thought the tenants of the Plaza would just roll over and accept the evictions. Lin has since become a dynamic activist leading the tenants into battle against the corrupt system harming so many elderly renters.

DEATH BY EVICTION

One elderly tenant of the Pacific Renaissance Plaza passed away in the third week of June; her family requested to keep her name out of the papers. Many believe that the stress of the evictions killed the elderly woman, who was said to be very distraught over being displaced.

"I think that what happened to her is very real," said Vivian Chang. "It's a real death that took place after the evictions started to take place, and the evictions served have traumatized the elderly population to extremes."

Art Hom said that his 87-year-old mother, Wen Hom, is in better spirits now that community supporters have shown up to help fight the evictions. At first she was traumatized, he said, because it was a big surprise to find out that the tenants were living under a contract about to expire.

Wen Hom was born in China, and came to Oakland in 1946. Though independent, she is disabled with a serious congestive heart failure, lives alone on Social Security and pays a monthly rent of $1,017, which barely allows her to maintain an existence in a world of greedy landlords and crooked politicians.

Art Hom believes that it is his duty to help keep his mother in affordable housing and to support her as much as he can so that she may survive and retain some kind of life with dignity. He gave thanks to the people who have supported the Plaza residents, saying, "These evictions cut across all class and cultural lines to affect all generations."

According to Francis Chang, 20 tenants signed a petition asking Larry Chan to stop the evictions, keep all 50 units as affordable housing, and allow those who have already left to move back and reclaim their former homes.

Of the 50 units facing eviction, only about 20 have not yet fled to other regions, said Francis Chang. The history of the Chinese is very sad, he said. No one fights back when pushed around, and most follow orders when told to move.

Chang is worried about his parents' dilemma and wants them to be able to live their lives out in peace. The Changs were born in China, moved to Taiwan, and came to the United States in 1980. The 94-year-old Mr. Chang retired from the government, and with his 80-year-old wife, has lived at the Plaza for almost 10 years. Both are disabled, and no one ever notified them in advance about the deal made with the city that would result in their displacement, the younger Chang said.

"We have lots of support now from the community and Vivian at APEN," Chang said, "and my folks are once again able to get a night's sleep, which seemed pretty elusive during the first few weeks after receiving the eviction notices."

In a message to the readers of *Street Spirit*, Francis Chang said, "Let's all work together to fight these evictions. Your help is very much needed. Feel free to call me at 510/635-4270."

For more information, contact Just Cause at (510) 763-5877. For more information about the Pacific Renaissance Plaza struggle, call APEN at (510) 834-8920.

Artists Fight Back

from page one

Center in shambles by negligently failing to maintain the property and by siphoning funding from the Alice to support the mayor's charter school. The speakers went on to denounce the mayor for his policies that have displaced poor renters and artists from Oakland since he came into office. The crowd vowed to fight him all the way on this one.

City Councilwoman Nancy Nadel came out to speak in support of the demonstrators, then told them to keep the noise down because they were trying to conduct business inside City Hall. The moment she left, the stunned crowd came back to life and ignored this ridiculous request. One speaker declared that they had a sound permit, and that no one had the right to keep them quiet at a time like this.

Despite the serious nature of the event, it was like a festival of the arts with colorful dancers keeping pace with the rhythm makers. Much of the crowd seemed to know one another or was quickly introduced to others in the community.

A TRAGIC BLOW

In another blow to Oakland's artistic community, on Sunday, June 15, an e-mail of great sadness was sent out. It said: "Hi everybody, I have some sad news to report today. Our dear Malonga passed away last night in a tragic car accident. A drunk driver was going the wrong way and collided with his car at great speed. He died instantly. So sorry to have to bring the sad news to you. Prayers, prayers, prayers... Frederique."

Famed Congolese dancer Malonga Casquelourd created his own dance troupe, Fua Dia Congo, which practices in the Alice Arts Center. He was struck and killed on Father's Day by a suspected drunken driver not far from the Alice Arts Center.

In memory of Casquelourd, about 600 people showed up at the Alice Arts Center on June 19 to honor the achievements of the man who turned Congolese dancing into an art form across the United States. Malonga Casquelourd was also an accomplished choreographer and drummer, and he will be missed by many around the globe.

Thousands of people have utilized the Alice Arts Center, compared to the 100 students stuffed into Mayor Brown's charter school down in the basement, totally separate from all the other programs offered at the center. The resident artists charge that the mayor's charter school disrupts the rest of the Alice Arts Center.

The Alice Arts Center has been home to the multicultural arts community of Oakland for more than 20 years; currently, 22 organizations and 50 residents operate at the center. It has grown ever since Mayor Lionel Wilson in 1987 allocated the Alice Arts Center to the people of Oakland and the arts community. There are 74 residential units available for artists. Many units need work due to the negligence of city officials, residents said.

The residents and artists have tirelessly protested Mayor Brown's plans to enlarge his charter school and have charged the mayor with putting them all at risk of being displaced. Evidently, their protests have been successful in causing the mayor to back down from his plans.

A press release from Mayor Brown on June 12, 2003, declared that the expansion of his charter school at the Alice Arts Center is no longer being considered, and that the mayor is considering moving the charter school to the old Fox Theater on Telegraph Avenue. Estimates are that it would cost nearly $80 million to restore the Fox Theater during Oakland's current fiscal crisis, leading some observers to believe that the mayor is not serious and is only stalling for time in hopes that the protesters go away.

Theo Williams, a member of the Artists Coalition, said, "We still have a fight with the mayor, and there's no reason to stop fighting for the poor renters and artists of Oakland." There are no guarantees and nothing in writing to save the Alice Arts Center, Williams added.

The mayor claims to be leaving, but Williams said there is a half-million dollars hidden in the City budget for the new fiscal year that is slated for the mayor's charter school, with none of that money to be allocated for the Alice Arts Center.

"We are all still at risk of being evicted, and having the Alice Arts Center being mismanaged due to the greedy ambitions of Mayor Jerry Brown makes matters all the worse," Williams said.

The Alice Arts Center activists continue to mobilize new supporters. They made common cause with elderly Chinese tenants threatened with eviction at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza, and joined forces with them in a rally at City Hall on June 24.

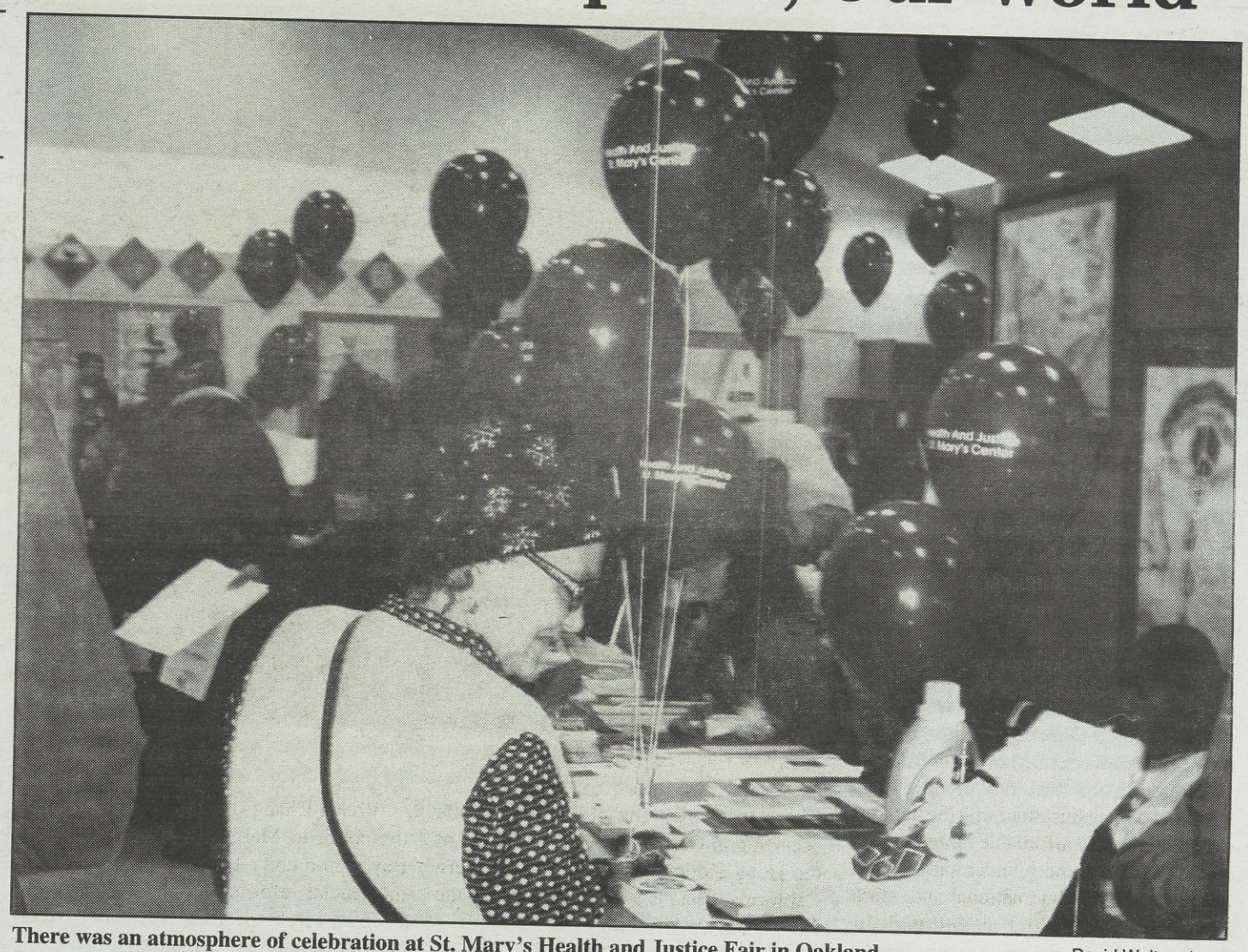
As a sign of their effectiveness, Oakland's Community and Economic Development Agency passed a resolution on June 24 requiring that any further reduction in rental units at the Alice Arts Center would have to go before the City Council before being allowed to take place.

For more information about the Alice Arts Center fight, call (510) 839-4301.

Healing Our Bodies, Our Spirits, Our World

St. Mary's Center holds a Health and Justice Fair in Oakland.

by Cindy Preston-Pile



There was an atmosphere of celebration at St. Mary's Health and Justice Fair in Oakland. David Wolter photo

It was raining. We didn't really think that it would. Yet with the flexibility and creativity characteristic of St. Mary's Center's in downtown Oakland, the staff and senior advocates alike immediately regrouped and altered our plan to hold our first Health and Justice Fair outside. We quickly filled every available corridor and corner of our communal dining room with tables and chairs for all of the organizations coming to set up booths.

And what a gathering it was, as these groups began to arrive, nearly 70 co-sponsors in all. It was chilly outside, but as friends greeted friends and new acquaintances were made (partially due to such close quarters), a welcoming warmth emanated from the room. As the program on the main stage began, the music and the drumming drew us more deeply into the spirit of the day — a day where health was viewed not only in terms of our bodies, but our spirit, and the bodies and spirits of our sisters and brothers who suffer from poverty and injustice.

We welcomed those who had walked before us on the path of healing, peace and justice: Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, Barbara Lee, Rachel Corrie, our seniors, our youth — and all of us, tireless workers for human rights in the ordinary circumstances of our everyday lives.

Attendees participated wholeheartedly in the program as it unfolded, experimenting with Tai Chi and exercising with Dynabands. They created artwork and received health screenings and massages. They watched videos and, when the children from St. Mary's Preschool joined us, a puppet show on nonviolent communication. They sampled healthy food and continued to interact with each other, to learn more about the unique resources that each organization offered.

There was laughter. There were smiles. People danced and swayed as the music continued to weave a thread of hope and inspiration throughout the day. As I felt people's moods lift and soar, I realized that the Spirit was wise, raining down water upon us outside so that She could gather us close in one room and rain down this gift of pure joy upon us.

People needed to come to this fair — this communal celebration of local efforts toward wholeness and recognition of basic human rights — as war raged all around, in the form of violence against the people of Iraq and violence against poor and homeless people in this country.

People needed to lift up the good work that our communities are doing. And they needed to feel empowered to continue to act. Speakers highlighted the need to save our safety net as extreme budget cuts loomed ahead. They emphasized that housing, health care and food security are basic rights to which all are entitled; and they offered ways that attendees could work to ensure that those rights are upheld.

Power was a palpable presence in that room. When Jose Ierdo, St. Mary's Center Senior Advocate for Hope and Justice, rose to speak, in many ways he embodied that power. Jose, a man who has traveled a rocky road, now stood before this crowd, and advocated not only on his own behalf, but for all who were suffering and homeless. He was a living testimony to *the power unleashed when we share our* stories of our life-long journey from woundedness to wholeness.

Fed by such an abundance of manna throughout the day, all left renewed, ready for the struggle ahead: the struggle of healing ourselves and our world.

Where to Eat When You're on the Street

St. Mark's Church in Berkeley

Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

by Maureen Hartmann

The public dining room at St. Mark's Church in Berkeley has been operating for about 15 years, according to one of the volunteers, a University of California student from Habitat for Humanity. The dining room operates in the parish hall, on 2300 Bancroft Way at Ellsworth in Berkeley, on the third Saturday of the month. The dining room is open at 5 p.m. People come a half-hour or an hour early to get a ticket.

I saw at the door collecting tickets an old friend of mine, Scott Sinclair, an Episcopal priest who teaches at Dominican University. He attends the parish, and helps out with the dinner when needed.

Dinner was served in a beautiful atmosphere, both physically and psychologically. We guests came in to tables covered with yellow-and-orange-checkered tablecloths. The tables were set with real silverware, paper napkins, paper cups, and beverages, including cold milk, Tropicana orange juice, and coffee. The coffee was brought to the table and poured from a pitcher by a volunteer. On the table were small paper bowls, for sharing among the guests, with kim chee, (spiced cabbage).

The efficient and friendly volunteer brought us our entrées on a white china plate with a light blue rim, and a design of blue leaves and flowers. The food was just as inviting. It included a large, plump chicken sausage, tasty to the palate, mashed potatoes with chives, and a spinach leaf salad with vinaigrette dressing and chunks of Roquefort cheese. Mustard was available on the table for the sausage. Dessert was a pineapple short cake with sweet white sauce.

I didn't go hungry in spite of being a semi-vegetarian. The volunteer brought to the table hard-boiled eggs as well. She asked if anyone wanted to take food with him/her. The cook responsible for this gourmet feast was Annie May de Bresson.

I interviewed two young men who wished to remain anonymous. The first said, "The food was excellent. The service was excellent; china is a lot more work for people who have to cleanup.... It's fine the way it is." His favorite foods at St. Mark's were the salad and coffee, which he has had here before. He has been coming there "probably about three to four years." He comes there "maybe every other month or so."

I asked him what the meal meant in his life. He replied, "I can say from the physical side, sustenance, and usually I eat one meal a day; but I guess it's more than (that). I get to check in with friends. I get a lot more out of coming here to eat than just the food. I'm not really religious, (but) I need more than just food."

I asked if he thought any of the social services he uses were being cut back because of the war. He said that where he takes his shower, the hours have been cut back. "As a result of this war, more and more things will be cut back."

The second guest gave his middle name, "Angel." He was coming for the first time. He said, "The volunteers were very kind. The food was really good... very enjoyable. I like the way people are contributing their time helping other people. You feel that you are not alone."

In response to my question about the meaning of the meal in his life, he said, "Sustenance, but not only that. You see people, talk to them, find new acquaintances, get along with other people."

Altogether, the atmosphere at St. Mark's Church was very kind and

MacArthur BART

by Linda Duffy

I see him coming home,
his shoes taped together with duct tape,
tattered torn blanket draped around him,
same clothes, same blanket, same bench,
never asks for money,
just listens to the ether.
The smell hits you five feet away;
he's a nasal leper.
But shelters are like the gaol
and full of thievery.
Hospitals, jails and Board and Cares
don't care either.
Sometimes the freedom to be
sick on the street seems the best.
But he is cold and hungry and
lonely and scared,
tormented by voices and
fooled by the monkey that lies.
What can I do? I've got my own
problems. I'm on SSI too.
So I gave him what was left of my lunch.
He didn't take the apple — no teeth.
But he took the candy bar,
and I hope a little love.

Electroconvulsive Brainwashing

by Terry Messman

Leonard Roy Frank's name is spoken with something approaching reverence by those movement activists, journalists, psychiatrists and psychiatric survivors who have come to know his work in exposing the abuses of psychiatry over the past 30 years. He has the bearing and intensity of an Old Testament prophet as he speaks gently and thoughtfully, yet with a deep urgency, of the countless lives that have been destroyed or irreparably damaged by what he describes as "psychiatric atrocities."

Without hesitation, those activists who have built a nationwide human rights movement to resist psychiatric abuses compare him to past movement builders such as Gandhi and King.

David Oaks, executive director of MindFreedom and a leading activist in the national movement of psychiatric survivors, says flatly, "Leonard Roy Frank is the Gandhi of the psychiatric survivors' movement. He's really helped bring a powerful spiritual discipline to this movement, similar to the work of Martin Luther King. Certainly in the 20th century, Leonard would be one of the foremost challengers of psychiatry, especially electroshock."

Both in appearance and in his outspoken activism against injustice, Leonard somehow calls to mind such prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Interestingly, Leonard was led to an in-depth study of those Biblical prophets through his immersion in the writings and activism of a devout Hindu, Mohandas Gandhi.

In fact, as we trace Leonard's life journey, it becomes tempting to blame his reading of Gandhi for his incarceration in a psychiatric facility and the torturous, life-endangering mistreatment he underwent there. But it was also Gandhi who supplied him with all the vital clues needed to later stage an uprising against the forces of psychiatric oppression.

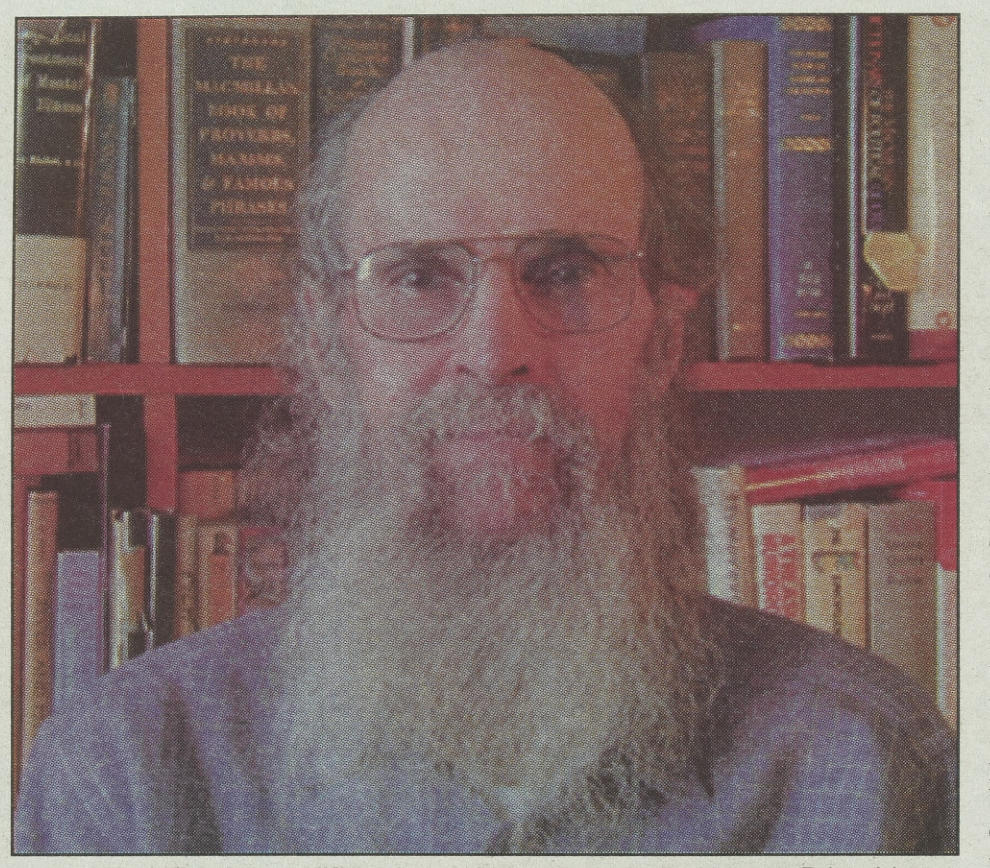
Leonard Roy Frank was a very conventional young man when he moved to San Francisco in 1959. A business graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and an Army veteran, he went to work selling real estate for a downtown San Francisco firm.

What happened next also was not that unusual for a young man in San Francisco. While employed as a realtor, a businessman without any interest in spirituality or activism, he innocently opened up Gandhi's autobiography, and found something deeply stirring and meaningful in the Hindu activist's reverence for all life, his spiritual depth, and his dedication to nonviolent social change.

Somehow, by reading Gandhi, Leonard had wandered into the whirlwind. He immersed himself in studying the spiritual mentors that Gandhi described in his autobiography. For the next three years, Leonard virtually dropped out of mainstream society, and spent his days voraciously reading Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bible*, depth psychologist Carl G. Jung, historian Arnold Toynbee and the mythologist Joseph Campbell.

While reflecting on these newly discovered insights, Leonard became a vegetarian, grew a beard, left his job selling real estate, and devoted himself exclusively to these spiritual pursuits. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of youth followed this very path in the later 1960s and 1970s. Leonard Roy Frank's mistake was to do it a few years ahead of his time.

He paid a very serious price for taking Gandhi so seriously. His parents had him involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital, and Leonard was confined for a season in hell. For the next seven months, he was imprisoned and forced to undergo what can only be characterized as psychiatric torture — 50 insulin-induced comas and 35 electroshock procedures.



Leonard Roy Frank, a prolific writer, editor and scholar, paid a heavy price for his passionate devotion to the books shown here. Robert Arbegast photo

"My learning had been largely destroyed for virtually all of my adult life. Large pieces of my life were destroyed. I don't think of electroshock in terms of electroconvulsive treatment. I speak of it as electroconvulsive brainwashing, because that is exactly what was done in my case."

Many years later, Leonard was able to obtain his medical records. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, the author, former psychoanalyst and critic of Freud, described the content of his medical records.

Masson wrote: "Leonard Roy Frank, who has been very active in the movement, managed to get his 'medical' files from the 'hospital' where he was incarcerated.... The documents reveal clearly that Frank's five major symptoms, in the eyes of the doctors who examined him, were: he was not working; he had grown a large, full beard; he had piercing eyes; he was a vegetarian; and, in the words of the medical examiners, he 'lived the life of a beatnik — to a certain extent.' When he was taken, involuntarily, to a psychiatric institution, he developed a sixth symptom: he did not recognize that he was ill. Therapy consisted of artificially induced insulin comas and electroconvulsive shocks. The psychoanalyst who diagnosed Frank as a 'paranoid schizophrenic' also suggested removing his beard as part of the therapy....

"The doctor who actually gave the shock treatments wrote to Frank's parents: 'We have increased the frequency of the shock treatments this week to a total of five treatments, namely one daily, as I wanted to have him a little more confused and clouded at this time if we are to remove the beard so that he would not be too acutely aware and distressed by this procedure.' "

It was all to no avail. Their torture-disguised-as-therapy failed to turn Leonard Roy Frank back into an obedient, conformist, real-estate salesman. Forty years later, he still is a vegetarian, still has the piercing eyes, and long ago grew back the beard. He still reads Gandhi, Thoreau and Jung in search of spiritual and political wisdom. In that sense, he still "lives the life of a beatnik — to a certain extent."

In every sense, Leonard became even more of a rebel after these horrific experiences. He grew into a dedicated nonviolent activist, helping to build the movement of psychiatric survivors and leading prophetic protests against electroshock, forced drugging, and psychosurgery.

But it would falsify the picture to understate the amount of devastation that psychiatrists did to his brain with the insulin coma/electroshock procedures. California psychiatrists deliberately put Leonard and many other patients into brain-damaging comas by injecting large doses of insulin to reduce blood sugar and trigger a "physiological crisis" marked by irregularities in blood pressure, breathing, pulse and heart rates. Patients underwent an excruciating ordeal, manifested by what Leonard described as "incontinence and vomiting; moans and screams (referred to in the professional literature as 'noisy excitement'); sobbing, salivation, and sweating; severe restlessness; shaking, spasms, and sometimes convulsions."

The crisis intensified for hours until the patient was plunged into a life-endangering coma. Brain cell destruction occurred as the "sugar-starved brain" began feeding on itself for nourishment. Patients were left in the coma for an hour, then revived by the administration of glucose and sugar. Sometimes subjects could not be restored to consciousness and would go into prolonged comas, resulting in more severe brain damage and sometimes death.

The insulin coma treatments could have ended Leonard's life. Years later, he was stunned to learn that Max Fink, a doctor who headed the insulin treatment ward at a Long Island hospital, reported that the death rate from insulin coma was anywhere from one to ten percent.

The staggering total of 50 insulin comas and 35 electroshock procedures he was forced to undergo literally erased his memory for the past few years, thus eliminating all of what he had learned from Gandhi, Thoreau, Jung, et al. during what he called his "conversion period." The memory loss stretched back even further. He soon found that his entire college and high school education was gone.

Even worse, he was left with a serious learning disability. "I also had to relearn much of the English language," he said. "I had forgotten the meaning of many once-familiar words and had difficulty using correctly the words I understood."

Since insulin comas had erased his political and spiritual studies in a process he today denounces as "electroconvulsive brainwashing," the first act of resistance Leonard committed was to re-read all his books and retrieve those insights from the oblivion of insulin coma.

The second act of resistance to psychiatric abuse was to join the editorial group that produced the legendary publication, *Madness Network News,* in the 1970s and '80s. *Madness Network News* was a beautifully designed publication that gave voice to psychiatric survivors and featured groundbreaking investigative reporting on electroshock, neuroleptic drugs, tardive dyskinesia and other forms of psychiatric mistreatment.

The third step in overcoming the injustices he had suffered was helping to organize the Network Against Psychiatric Abuse (NAPA). NAPA activists used the philosophy of Gandhian nonviolence to build a movement that used civil disobedience and colorful protests to resist electroshock, forced drugging and slave labor in California psychiatric facilities. NAPA achieved significant reforms through these nonviolent campaigns that helped protect the rights of mental-health consumers.

Leonard also became a formidable scholar on psychiatric issues. He helped edit and publish two highly influential books and many magazine articles on the subject of psychiatric abuses. He edited *The History of Shock Treatment*, and was co-editor of *The Madness Network News Reader*. To read those two books today is to be amazed at the wealth of scholarly information and far-seeing insights that have been influential in educating a new generation of authors on these issues.

Beginning with *Random House Webster's Quotationary* in 1998, Leonard Roy Frank has created a series of books published by Random House that gather together some of the wisest quotations and axioms from the world's most profound scholars, authors, activists, historians, philosophers and spiritual thinkers. Every month, Leonard publishes an anthology of those quotations in *Street Spirit*, entitled "Poor Leonard's Almanack."

It's a highly ironic turn of events that he has become a successful editor publishing the very same kinds of spiritual and political insights that psychiatry once tried to eradicate from his brain. His life is living testimony to the truth that full recovery from psychiatric abuse is indeed possible. You simply can't keep a good mind down, not even with 85 insulin comas and electroshocks.

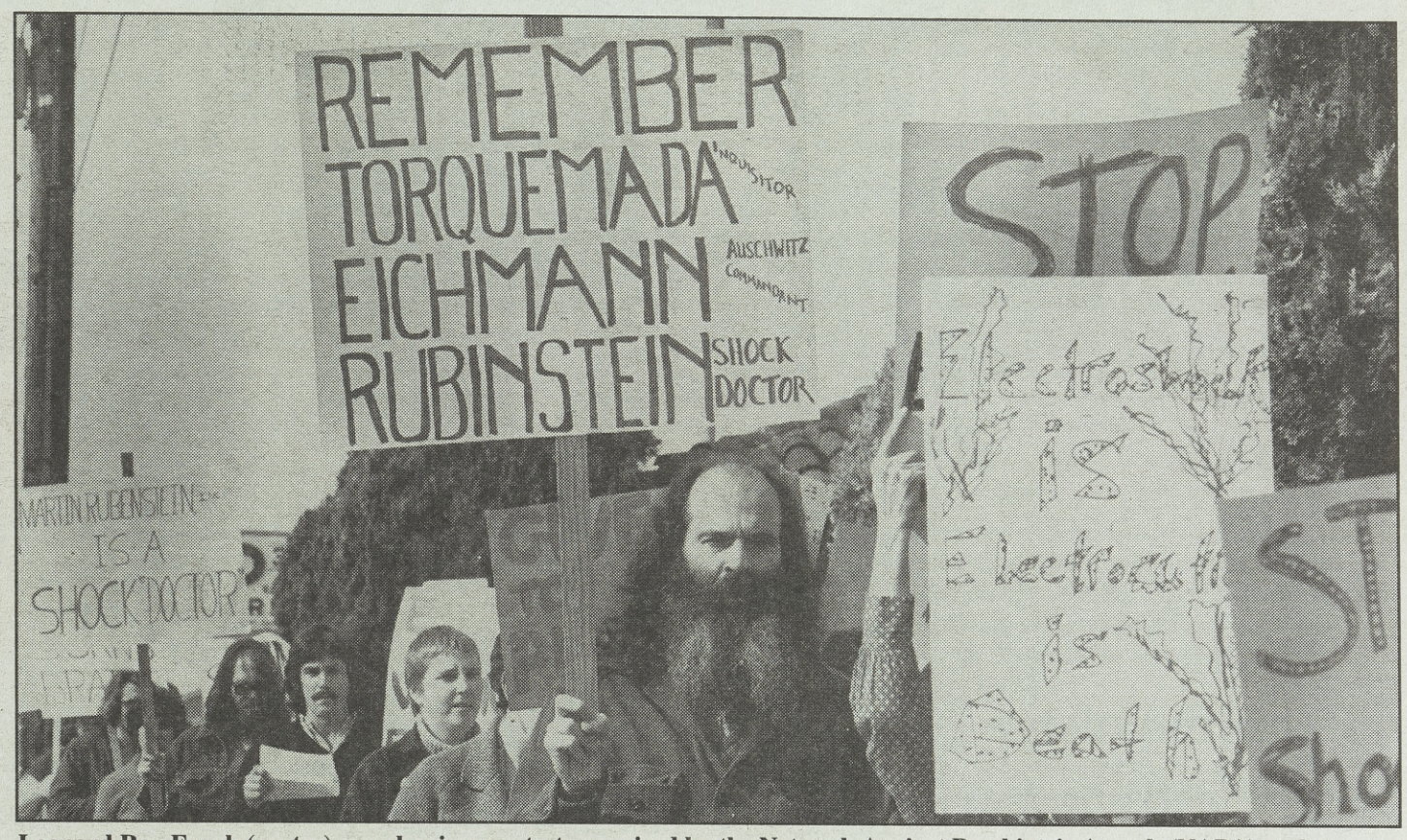
During the interview, as I listened to Leonard Roy Frank's ideas about nonviolence, peacemaking and spirituality, it seemed all the more outrageous that such a gentle thinker was attacked by the powers that be, taken captive, silenced, electroshocked and purposely sent into life-threatening comas.

What happened to Leonard was chilling, but his first-hand experience of psychiatric torture pushed him to begin organizing for the rights of psychiatric survivors. Oppression can beget liberation in spirits strong enough to take the worst punishment and survive. Leonard bounced back stronger than ever and put his studies in the nonviolence of Gandhi, Thoreau, and Jesus to work in creating a movement for the voiceless victims of our time.

"*Truth crushed to earth will rise again.*" If his psychiatrists had ever bothered to read Gandhi and King, they might have realized that Leonard would survive his soul-crushing captivity, and rise again in the struggle for justice.

The *Street Spirit* Interview with Leonard Roy Frank

Interview by Terry Messman



Leonard Roy Frank (center) marches in a protest organized by the Network Against Psychiatric Assault (NAPA) at the Oakland office of Martin J. Rubinstein, M.D., while he was administering electroconvulsive treatment to a 17-year-old woman. Protest held by NAPA on January 26, 1976. Photo by Pat Goudvis from *Madness Network News.*

"I was in the hospital and all this assault had taken place and my memories had been destroyed. I recognized it immediately as an atrocity that had nothing to do with therapy or trying to help me in any sense of the term. It was a tremendous violation of my humanity and I was going to fight it if I ever had the chance." — Leonard Roy Frank

Street Spirit: *You have been one of the most prominent activists questioning the legitimacy of psychiatry and condemning its abuses. What led you to become such an outspoken critic?*

Leonard Roy Frank: My run-in with psychiatry happened back in 1962 and '63. About two years before this encounter with psychiatry, I had been undergoing some personal changes in terms of my lifestyle and my beliefs. I decided the person I had been before was not the person I really wanted to be, and I knew I was going to have to do a lot of growing.

A number of books influenced me greatly, including Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography. With Gandhi's book, I was first introduced to the ideas of nonviolence and social change by peaceful means and vegetarianism and spirituality.

Gandhi also inspired me in regards to civil disobedience. After getting involved in the psychiatric survivors movement in the early 1970s, I personally engaged in acts of civil disobedience with other people in the movement in a number of cities. I was arrested in Toronto, New York City, Berkeley, and in Sacramento, where we conducted a 30-day sleep-in in then-Gov. Jerry Brown's office to protest the forced drugging and involuntary slave labor of psychiatric inmates in state hospitals.

Spirit: *Looking back, it seems that this early immersion in Gandhi was preparing you for your future role in the resistance movement led by psychiatric survivors.*

Leonard: Yes. My studying of Gandhi was not merely an intellectual exercise. It was all preparatory to actually living out these ideas in my life, including civil disobedience for social change.

Then I investigated a number of the books that Gandhi recommended in his autobiography, including Henry David Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. I read the *New Testament* and the *Old Testament*. Then I started broadening my reading. I became very interested in the historical writings of Arnold Toynbee, and I read Emerson and other works by Thoreau. Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, had a big impact on me.

I was not only reading these books, but I was beginning to practice the ideas in these books in my everyday life. I became a vegetarian; I became very interested in spiritual matters. I began to see the world and myself with new eyes.

Spirit: *No wonder you ended up in trouble with mainstream society, because those books were instrumental in launching the whole 1960s counterculture. You were just a few years ahead of your time.*

Leonard: I was a little bit ahead of my time; and when my parents got wind of this, they became very concerned about what was going on with me. After reading these books, I came to challenge not only what I had believed and how I had lived previously; but I began to reflect on society at large, and I saw that there were a lot of things going on that were very damaging to our well-being and negatively affected the community, family life, child-rearing practices and relationships.

So suddenly everything was up for grabs in terms of my values. Later, I learned the expression that what was needed was a revaluation of all values, in the phrase by Nietzsche.

Spirit: *Were you a real estate agent when you began going through these changes?*

Leonard: Well, I had been a real-estate broker in New York, where I was born and raised. I had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania where I was a marketing major, then I was in the Army for a couple years. Then I became a real estate broker in New York and then in Florida. At the ripe old age of 28, I moved to San Francisco, thinking that this was a better area to practice my business. I went to work for a downtown real estate firm.

After a few months, I began to get interested in these other things, and lost interest in real estate. I started reading more and more, and became less and less interested in bricks and mortar, and more and more interested in things of an intellectual and spiritual nature. I became interested in philosophy and religion and history and spirituality and politics.

This was very troubling to my parents. I wasn't troubled by this change at all; I thought this was an opening up, and that I was really growing. It was a wonderful experience to me. I didn't feel this was a dangerous path to be going on, or that I was going to be getting into any deep trouble. I felt that it was really necessary to take some time to really rethink all these things in order to decide the direction that I wanted to take with my life.

I was doing that for about two years in the early 1960s, and during that time frame, my parents visited periodically and they became, predictably, more upset with the kind of person I was becoming, because I was moving off into a completely different direction.

Spirit: *Just five years later, thousands of young people would be going in exactly that same direction, away from conformity and mainstream jobs, and into political and spiritual rebellion. But you were a premature member of the counterculture.*

Leonard: I wasn't really a hippie in any sense of the word, other than that I was rebelling against the status quo and everything it stood for. But in terms of my lifestyle, I wasn't leading an outrageous life or dressing in strange clothing or doing things that would cause me to be thought of as a nuisance in any way. I was, instead, spending a lot of time in the library and second-hand bookstores and buying all these books and reading them. I was building up a whole library of books and studying and rethinking things.

My parents decided this was not the right thing for me and they urged me to see a psychiatrist. I had already done some reading in the writings of Freud and Jung, an eminent psychiatrist, during this period. I was very favorably impressed with Jung because he did have a component of his belief system that dealt very specifically with spiritual matters and human development and growth and awareness and mythology and lots of wonderful things. I'm still, to this day, very influenced by the writings of Carl Jung. His book, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, is one of my favorite books.

Spirit: *That's Jung's autobiography where he looks deeply into his own spiritual growth, visions, and dream symbols.*

Frank: Yes, his autobiography. But from Jung's books, there was no indication of what psychiatry was really all about. Jung was just describing what we call "talk therapy," psychoanalysis in the case of Freud; and in the case of Jung, it was called analytical psychology. But I didn't have any knowledge of what psychiatry was all about — that is, real psychiatry as it is practiced in institutions.

Spirit: *You were interested in Jungian psychotherapy, but had no idea what psychiatrists did in state mental hospitals?*

Leonard: Yes, as opposed to people going voluntarily to someone's office and talking about their personal problems and traumas. I wasn't interested in the psychiatric approach, but my parents became more and more insistent upon that idea. By 1963, I was a full-fledged vegetarian, I had grown a beard, and was not communicating well with my parents; and that was something that disappointed them a lot, and understandably.

So when I was not willing to see a psychiatrist, they arranged to have a psychiatrist see me. In order to do that, they had to commit me involuntarily to a psychiatric hospital. I was picked up by the police, or the mental-health police, whatever they were, and brought to Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco, where I was kept for a couple days. Then I was sent to Napa State Hospital for a couple months. Then I was sent to Twin Pines Hospital in Belmont, south of San Francisco.

Spirit: *So you were involuntarily confined because you grew a beard, developed spiritual beliefs, practiced vegetarianism, and alienated your parents?*

Leonard: Yes. And from my hospital records, the initial medical examiner's report said that I was living alone, spending a lot of time studying, and "was living the life of a beatnik to a certain extent." Now this was between the beatnik and hippie eras, and those are the exact words of the medical examiner: "living the life of a beatnik to a certain extent." On that basis, I was denied my freedom. The records also mentioned I had grown a beard and had developed "vegetarian food idiosyncrasies," that was the phrase they used (laughing).

Spirit: *In "Howl," Allen Ginsberg described some of the best minds of his generation going through that same fate as the price of nonconformity.*

Leonard: Exactly. But it wasn't just nonconformity, it was non-productivity. I just wasn't working. I was just holed up in my apartment studying, and they just assumed that if I was living alone like that, I had to be up to no good.

Spirit: *How long were you locked up in psychiatric facilities and what kind of treatment did they impose?*

Leonard: I was locked up a total of seven and a half months. They tried to get me to accept electroshock and drugs at Napa State Hospital, and I refused. For some reason, they didn't force those treatments on me. It was only when I got to Twin Pines Hospital that they decided to go to court and get a court order authorizing them to administer insulin coma electroconvulsive treatment. The very next day following the court order, they started in with the insulin coma treatments in January. That lasted about four months.

Spirit: *What did it feel like to go through an insulin-induced coma?*

Leonard: It involved 85 shock treatments altogether. There were 50 insulin coma treatments and 35 electroconvulsive

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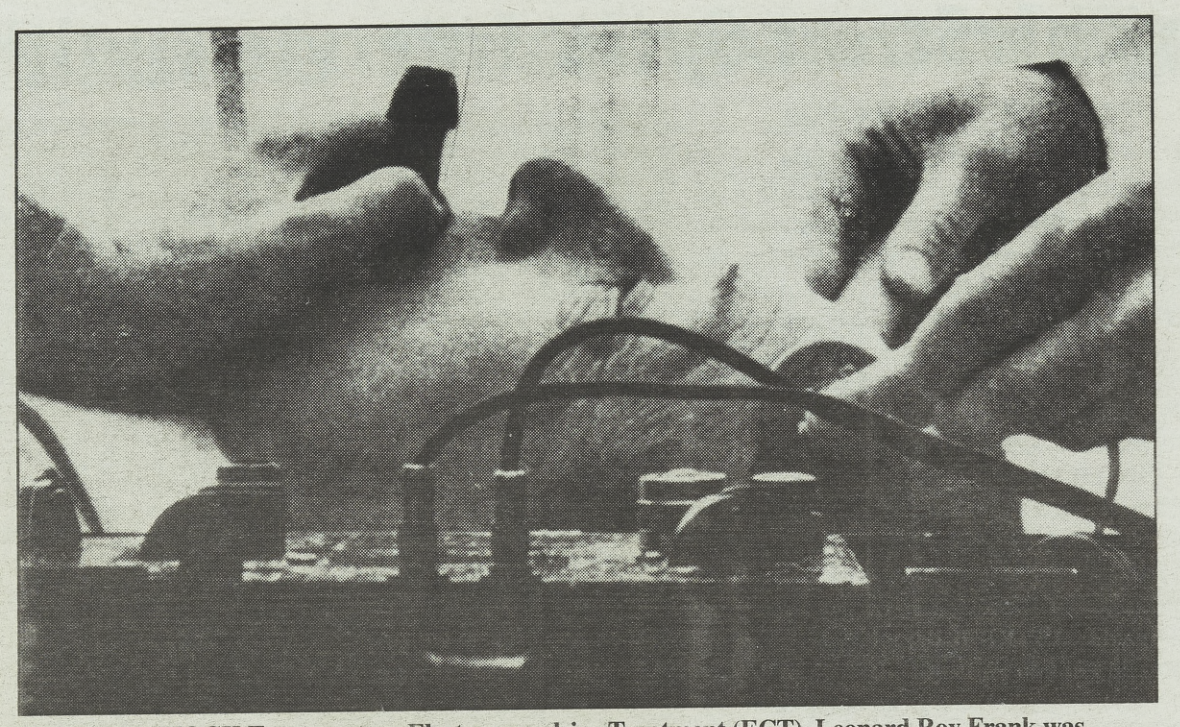
INSULIN COMA. This patient is in a deep coma five hours after the injection of 185 units of insulin. The nasal tube has already been inserted in preparation for termination of the hypoglycemia. Leonard Roy Frank was forced to undergo 50 insulin comas.

Photo from *The History of Shock Treatment* by Leonard Roy Frank.



ELECTROSHOCK Treatment, or Electroconvulsive Treatment (ECT). Leonard Roy Frank was subjected to a series of 35 electroshock treatments. Photo from *Madness Network News Reader*.

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treatments. The treatment was the most horrible experience of my life. The treatment was so devastating, in terms of the brain damage it caused, that I had no memory of the months-long treatment period, other than coming out of the last coma, which was a perfectly horrific experience.

You're going in and out of consciousness as you recover your awareness. You don't do it all at once; it's a gradual process. When you become conscious, you become keenly aware of tremendous hunger pangs because part of the process of insulin coma is to bring you to a state of insulin deprivation. When you don't have any sugar running through your brain, that causes the brain to break down and that's why you go into a comatose state.

So I came to with unbelievable hunger pangs and saw these strangers hovering over this bed where I was strapped down; my memory had been wiped out, and I didn't know who any of these people were. And they were injecting me with needles to restore me to consciousness. Because if you're allowed to remain in a coma for an undue period of time, much longer than an hour, it not only destroys your brain cells, it can kill you.

Spirit: *The psychiatrists subjected you to an experimental treatment that carried a significant risk of death?*

Leonard: Yes. The prolonged coma was one of the main reasons why people died from insulin coma treatment. One published study in the early 1940s indicated that nearly five percent of the people undergoing insulin coma treatment at state hospitals died as a result of that.

Spirit: *In other words, every time they gave you one of those 50 insulin coma treatments, they were playing Russian roulette with your life.*

Leonard: Exactly. My life was greatly endangered, yes. I just read in the last year an article published by a very well-known psychiatrist named Max Fink, a well-known insulin/electroshock doctor still living today. Max Fink's article was describing insulin coma treatment, a procedure which he knew very well because he headed the insulin treatment ward at a Long Island Hospital back in the 1940s and 1950s. He was reporting that the death rate from insulin coma was anywhere from one to ten percent. Here he was an authority in the field, and the best he could do, in terms of figuring out the number of people who died from this procedure, was one to ten percent. Well, there were tens of thousands of people who underwent this procedure over the years!

Spirit: *That's a very high mortality rate. It must have led to countless premature deaths.*

Leonard: Thousands of deaths.

Spirit: *What shape were you in when you came out of the series of comas?*

Leonard: When I came out of it, I had a near-total loss of memory. I didn't know who these people were hovering over my bed as they were trying to restore me to consciousness. I didn't even know that John F. Kennedy was the president of the United States, although he had been elected nearly three years previously. Here I was, the person that was really up on what was going on in the world, but I didn't know that he was president. After a while, when I tried to figure out the extent of my losses, I realized that nearly three years of my previous life up to that point was entirely wiped out — including this period of tremendous growth.

Spirit: *All that intellectual and spiritual growth was simply erased?*

Leonard: All that was wiped out. I was regressed back to the point that I was before then. But not only that, there was also a tremendous wipeout of memories from my college and high school education. When I came out of the hospital and really began to understand the extent of my losses, I figured I was about at the level of an eighth-grader in terms of my intellectual development. I remembered certain courses I had taken, but in terms of the subject matter itself, the content of those courses, there was virtually nothing.

Spirit: *So your memory, your spiritual and scholarly insights, and your academic studies all the way back to eight grade, much of that was stolen from you.*

Leonard: I would say that I was robbed of those memories. They were destroyed outright. The only way they could have accomplished that was by causing brain damage, because your memories are housed in your brain cells, and when your brain cells are destroyed, the memories contained in those cells are destroyed too.

Spirit: *Yet your only "transgression" was to be immersed in the study of nonviolence, peacemaking, spirituality and social justice. It seems even more outrageous that these were the very thoughts they were determined to eradicate.*

Leonard: All these wonderful teachings were coming my way and I was adopting them in my life. And the purpose of this psychiatric treatment was to destroy my memory for this period. They wanted to regress me back to the person I had been before this period of transition and transformation began. And they largely succeeded, because after the shock treatments, I had only the vaguest memories of the things I had been reading. I remembered the titles of a few books, but the teachings were for the most part forgotten. I had to relearn them; and it was much more difficult because I no longer had a fully intact brain.

Spirit: *The comas and shock treatments left you with global amnesia, but also with a serious learning impairment?*

Leonard: Oh, definitely. It became much more difficult to learn and memorize things. Even to this day, if I go to the supermarket and have more than three items to purchase, I have to write them down; otherwise I'll come back with only two of the three. My learning had been largely destroyed for virtually all of my adult life. Large pieces of my entire life were destroyed.

I don't think of electroshock in terms of electroconvulsive treatment, which is the psychiatric term for the procedure. I speak of it as electroconvulsive brainwashing, because that is exactly what was done in my case, and what is done even to this day whenever electroshock is administered to anyone. There is always a degree of memory loss and the amount of the memory loss is contingent upon the amount of shocking being done, the intensity of the shocks, the number and frequency of shocks. What it really results in is a kind of euthanasia of the spirit.

Spirit: *The death of the spirit?*

Leonard: Your spirit, in my view, is housed in your brain. If brain cells are destroyed, it lessens your ability to think creatively and to think spiritually of higher things. It brings you down several notches in terms of your level of awareness. It's a life-diminishing procedure because it's a thought-diminishing procedure. It reduces your ability to act on the highest human level, which is, in my opinion, spiritual.

Spirit: *Considering what a prolific editor you are now, it's remarkable you recovered to the extent you did.*

Leonard: It took me years of restudying and re-examining things I had been reading prior to the insulin comas. I remembered the title of Gandhi's book and certain other titles of books that I had read — I remembered maybe 10 or 15 titles altogether, although I had read hundreds of books during that two-year period. I went right back and reread those books. I reread the Bible, I reread (French philosopher) Henri Bergson, I read all these books again. There was some déjà vu, like ideas that were a little bit familiar to me; but for the most part, it was like I was reading the material fresh.

Spirit: *That's exactly what Robert Pirsig describes in his book,* Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. *He said his deepest intellectual personality was destroyed by electroshock and he had to go back and retrace his intellectual footprints and recapture what he had lost. He would have flickering moments of déjà vu when he vaguely remembered that his earlier self had passed that way before, and had those insights before.*

Leonard: That's a wonderful book. What he did, he took a trip on his motorcycle in order to try to relive these experiences; whereas, I took my journey in my apartment. I did the very same thing by reading, studying, going to the library a lot. I reacquired the knowledge that had been destroyed and then went on to acquire new knowledge as well.

Spirit: *One of the things you eventually did in response to this dehumanization was to become one of the leading activists in the psychiatric survivors movement.*

Leonard: Yes, I became active in the movement in 1970, '71.

Spirit: *Did that help you deal with some the psychiatric abuses done to you?*

Leonard: It was validating in a sense. It gave me the opportunity to do what I had determined I was going to do if I ever had a chance. This is something I don't think I've spoken publicly about before. I

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Zen and the Art of Electroshock Therapy

"He was dead. Destroyed by order of the court, enforced by the transmission of high-voltage alternating current through the lobes of his brain. Approximately 800 mills of amperage at duration of 0.5 to 1.5 seconds had been applied on twenty-eight consecutive occasions, in a process known technologically as "Annihilation ECS." A whole personality had been liquidated without a trace in a technologically faultless act that has defined our relationship ever since. I have never met him. Never will.

And yet strange wisps of his memory suddenly match and fit this road and desert bluffs and white-hot sand all around us and there is a bizarre concurrence and then I know he has seen all of this. He was here, otherwise I would not know it. He had to be. And in seeing these strange coalescences of vision and in recall of some strange fragment of thought whose origin I have no idea of, I'm like a clairvoyant, a spirit medium receiving messages from another world. That is how it is. I see things with my own eyes, and I see things with his eyes too. He once owned them.

These EYES! That is the terror of it. These gloved hands I now look at, steering the motorcycle down the road, were once his! And if you can understand the feeling that comes from that, then you can understand real fear — the fear that comes from knowing there is nowhere you can possibly run." — Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Perennial Classics, 1974, 2000, pp. 88-89.

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can remember almost as soon as I had become aware of what had happened to me — that I was in the hospital and all this assault had taken place and my memories had been destroyed — I made up my mind that this was something I was going to fight against, if I ever had the chance.

I recognized it immediately as an atrocity that had nothing to do with therapy or trying to help me in any sense of the term. It was a tremendous violation of my humanity and I was going to fight it if I ever had the chance. Years after being released from the hospital, I got on board with the *Madness Network News*, which was first published in 1972. I was one of the people responsible for putting that out.

Spirit: *That was a legendary publication. Many activists still revere it. Even people who never had any contact with psychiatry or the psychiatric survivors' movement still remember what a seminal human rights journal that was.*

Leonard: it was a marvelous period. There was a book that came out of that as well, *Madness Network News Reader*, published by Glide Publications in 1974.

By then, I was operating my own art gallery in downtown San Francisco. I ran that gallery for five years. It was a wonderful location, and this was used as a meeting place for the organization that was to evolve out of *Madness Network News*. In 1974, a good friend of mine, Wade Hudson, and I decided to form the Network Against Psychiatric Assault (NAPA). We used my art gallery as our headquarters, and we used to hold our meetings there, and we would have forums and do a lot of organizing work.

Spirit: *Looking back on the history of the psychiatric survivors' movement, NAPA was truly a groundbreaking organization. It was one of the most dedicated group of activists fighting psychiatric assault, renowned for its struggles against electroshock in Bay Area hospitals.*

Leonard: When we began, in 1974 and 1975, we were organizing against the use of electroshock at Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, the UC Medical Center. We were holding public demonstrations there that were very vibrant and got a lot of media attention, television, radio and newspaper.

Eventually, we caused such a stir that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors conducted hearings on electroshock use in San Francisco. From those hearings, they actually called a moratorium on the use of electroshock in San Francisco, and that lasted for several years.

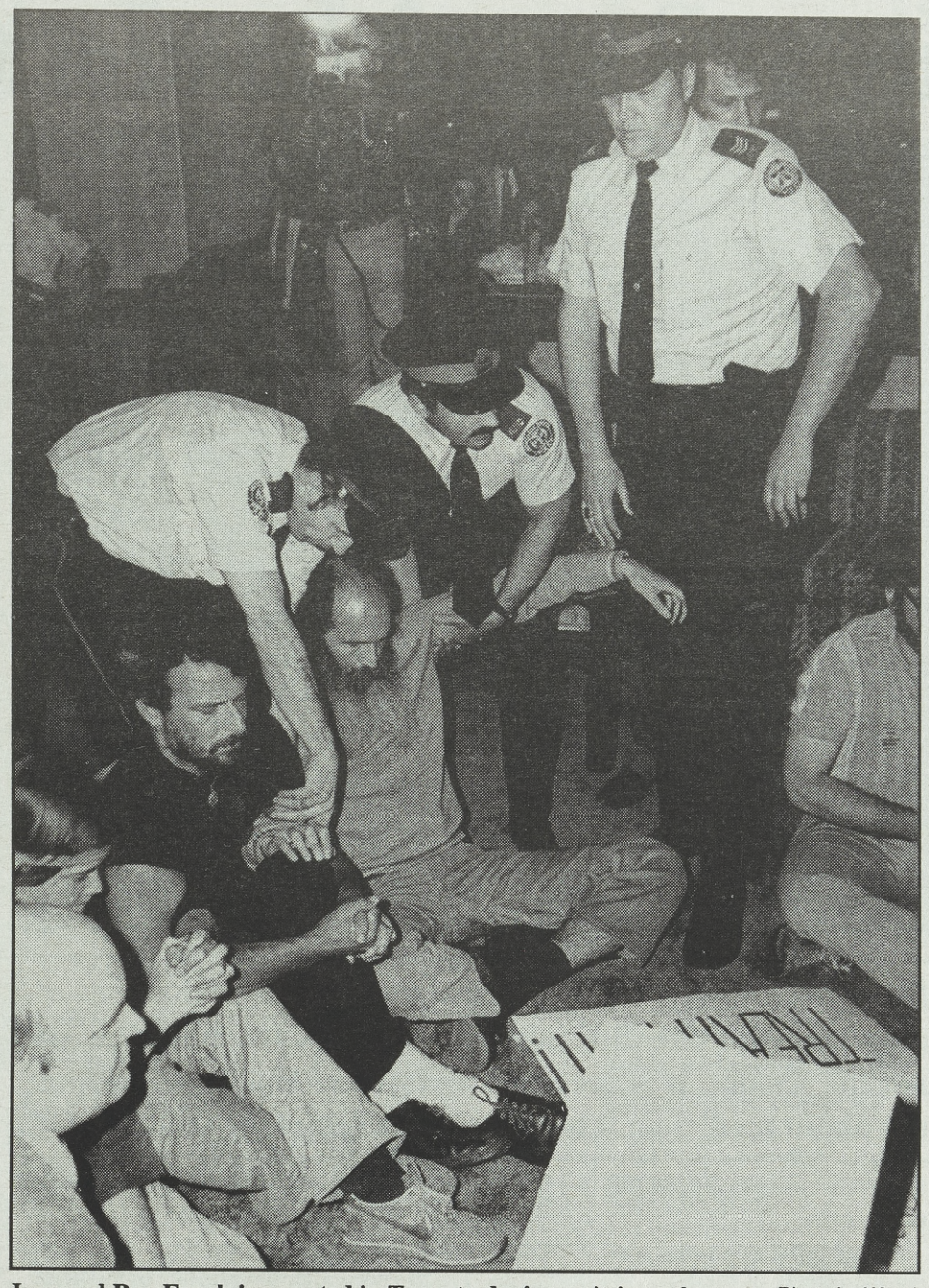
Spirit: *Have they resumed the use of electroshock?*

Leonard: Unfortunately, they're still doing electroshock in San Francisco. They resumed electroshock in the 1980s.

Spirit: *Many people think these kinds of things aren't being done anymore. The fact that psychiatrists still use such an assaultive treatment as electroshock is stunning, especially after all the work that groups like NAPA did to get it outlawed.*

Leonard: You know, it's an important point to make that one of the most crucial activities that NAPA engaged in during those early years was lobbying for legislation in California that would regulate the use of electroshock and lobotomy in our state. We were successful in having legislation enacted; it was run through by John Vasconcellos, an assembly member from San Jose. As a result, California became the first state to regulate electroshock.

Spirit: T*he bill gave people some legal safeguards?*



Leonard Roy Frank is arrested in Toronto during a sit-in at the American Psychiatric Association convention on May 17, 1982. Photo by Wood, *The Globe and Mail*

Leonard: Yes, protections. Not very good protections, but at least it was a step in the right direction. Since that time, my understanding is that about 30 states around the country have such legislation; but California was the first, and NAPA was the initiating group that led to the enactment of this legislation.

We also demonstrated against psychosurgery at the Federal Building. And we held a sleep-in in 1978 in Governor Jerry Brown's office. That lasted for 30 days, and led to an investigation that uncovered more than 20 questionable deaths of patients in state hospitals. Also as a result of that, there was an investigation into the use of drugging and forced labor in California state hospitals. So we did a lot of good work. We helped develop our movement in those early years.

Spirit: *In retrospect, many people see that lobotomy, electroshock and insulin coma are very crude assaults on the higher functions of the brain. But there's a common perception that psychiatry has progressed by utilizing the so-called antipsychotic drugs — both the neuroleptics such as Thorazine and Haldol and the newer atypical drugs such as Zyprexa and Clozaril. Do you think the drugs are a step up from lobotomy and electroshock?*

Leonard: Well, I think of the drugs as being a more sophisticated form of brain-damaging treatment. The crudest form, of course, was the lobotomy, then next comes the insulin coma, and then the electroshock. And now it's the so-called antipsychotic drugs and antidepressant drugs and the stimulant drugs. These have largely replaced the use of the crudest forms of brain-damaging procedures. But you can produce the same effect with these psychiatric drugs as you do with the lobotomy if you administer the drugs over a long enough period of time in large enough doses. It's just as simple as that.

In other words, we're talking about a continuum of treatment, with lobotomy at one end and the psychiatric drugs at the other end. They are all brain-damaging; it's just that the lobotomy is very quick. You go in there with a scalpel and you cut the brain connections and right away you produce an immediate effect: the person is dehumanized, they're robbed of their mental sharpness, and they're turned into vegetables, in a sense. With the electroshock, it takes a little bit longer with a series of shock treatments. That will have the same numbing effect and a dumbing-down effect, but it takes longer.

With the drugs, it takes still longer, and the desired effect, from the psychiatrist's point of view, is a person who is vegetable-like, who is very dependent and needy, and is just sort of sitting around, spaced out — but is not causing any trouble and is very easily managed. Someone who doesn't complain a lot and doesn't say an awful lot because they're functioning at a subhuman intellectual level.

Spirit: *Because they've lost a lot of their higher brain functions and even their emotions and basic personality, just as with the lobotomy.*

Leonard: Exactly. The chemicals also destroy healthy brain tissue, just like the lobotomy, only it takes a longer time.

Spirit: *A greater percentage of the population is subjected to these brain-damaging treatments than ever before.*

Leonard: The numbers involving these new techniques are staggering. For antipsychotic drugs alone, there may be five to ten million people on these drugs. These psychiatric drugs are not just given to people in institutions. Now people can be drugged against their will in their own homes. It's possible for someone's own home to be turned into a mental ward.

Spirit: *You're talking about forced outpatient treatment?*

Leonard: Yes, it's called involuntary outpatient treatment. With a court order, the psychiatric police can come to your house and forcibly administer drugs to you on a regular basis. That's happening throughout the country now, in 30 states that provide for involuntary outpatient treatment.

Spirit: *Along with the growing tendency to use antipsychotic drugs in lieu of therapy, psychiatry has also greatly expanded the number of diagnoses that call for the prescription of psychotropic drugs. What used to be called shyness and introversion is now called social anxiety disorder and drugs such as Paxil are regularly prescribed. This expands the number of people being drugged by millions.*

Leonard: The antipsychotic drugs are used by millions, but the antidepressant drugs may be used even more widely. The new antidepressants — drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft and Paxil — are being used by 12 million Americans. At first, antidepressants were given virtually only in cases of clinical depression — that is, for very, very severe depression. Now they're taken by people like they pop aspirin!

Whenever people feel uncomfortable about themselves, whenever they feel a little bit of anxiety or self-doubt, they pop one of these pills.

There have been studies conducted in England very recently that indicate that the use of Paxil increases suicidal ideation amongst children. Doctors in England who prescribe that drug are urged or required to inform prospective users of that particular risk as a warning to them.

This story was covered as the lead story in the business section of the *New York Times*. But I didn't see this story on the evening television news programs at all. That's not the kind of story that these programs want to publicize because the advertisers for the evening network news programs are very frequently the pharmaceutical houses. A significant percentage of the advertising in the evening news is from the pharmaceutical houses; and you can be sure that they would haul out the red flag if they saw a news segment that was prejudicial to their product. So that's another form of social control.

Spirit: *Loren Mosher, a psychiatrist and former head of schizophrenia research at the National Institute of Mental Health, recently said that the psychotropic drugging of children has escalated fourfold in the last decade. Is this an attempt to chemically subdue children who are simply reacting to school as kids have for centuries — by being bored or restless or disobedient or unruly?*

Leonard: Literally millions of children are being labeled with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD. They are children in school who are unruly and difficult to handle, kids who are upsetting to the equilibrium of the classroom. They're giving teachers a hard time, maybe giving their parents a hard time. Putting them on drugs is *purely* a social-control device. Stimulant drugs such as

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One of the worst problems is called neuroleptic malignant syndrome, which involves rigidity, fevers, seizures and confusion. It can result in sudden death. Robert Whitaker, in his book *Mad In America*, estimated that between 1960 and 1980, when people were not being informed about this risk of neuroleptic malignant syndrome, upwards of 100,000 human beings died as a result of this one symptom.

Biopsychiatry as a Social-Control Mechanism

by John Breeding

My purpose in this essay is twofold. The first is to describe my understanding of the nature of psychological distress and emotional healing. The second is to expose the truth about our modern mental health system, the institution of psychiatry, which diagnoses citizens as "mentally ill" and "treats" them accordingly.

On Human Nature

My view is that in order to have even the slightest hope of a clear understanding of psychological distress and healing, one has to have an accurate view of human nature. A paramount truth about humans is that we tend to see the world not as it is, but as we are. To a large extent, our beliefs and assumptions determine how and what we perceive around us. Until they are consciously challenged, the beliefs we hold are determined by what we experienced and learned as developing young people. School, religion, and family have all played major roles in affecting how we now see the world.

Let me illustrate this with a few prime examples. In the United States, we have grown up in a mostly Christian culture. Though Christianity is certainly evolving, most of us are still affected by a tendency to believe that we are born in sin, somehow unworthy and needing to be saved. Add to this the impact of Darwin's ideas about natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This has supported the notion that we need to somehow tame and civilize our naturally aggressive children.

Psychology's emphasis on behaviorism, and a school system designed according to these principles, lead us to see humans as born empty, a so-called tabula rasa or "blank slate" waiting to be written upon. Behavior modification (reward and punishment) becomes a primary tool to shape or condition children to be properly socialized. The worst example is that of biological psychiatry, which I will elucidate towards the end of this essay.

The bottom line is that we see others and ourselves as inherently sinful, unworthy, aggressive or empty, and we treat each other accordingly. We live in fear and worry, and we lack trust in ourselves.

My own view, and that of many others, is that humans are glorious beings. Our inherent nature is not fundamentally aggressive, unworthy, lazy, irresponsible or dumb. Nor is it empty. The truth is that we are born highly intelligent, zestfully energetic and naturally inclined toward closeness and affection. Just look with fresh eyes at those awesome babies, when their needs are well met, and you will know that.

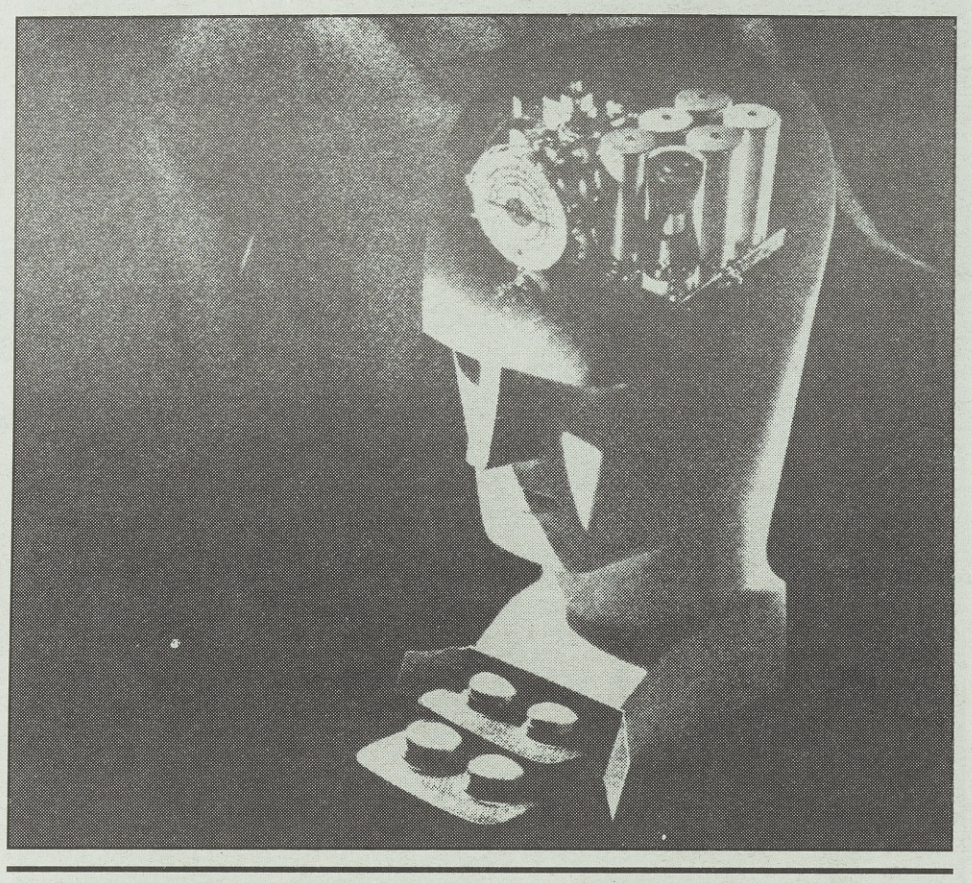
Distress and Emotional Healing

Where does distress come in? Well, take another look at those babies when their needs are not met. The sweet, delightful being disappears and a contorted, crying or screaming creature arrives. We are born with a wonderful true nature, and we are also very, very needy and dependent for a long time. Our development is complex and we need a lot of help.

The process of psychological distress is really quite simple. Our true nature is intelligent, zestful and loving. When we are hurt physically or emotionally, this causes distress (anger, grief, fear, shame, etc.). Distress interferes with true nature. We become less intelligent and less loving.

That covers most of it. Left unresolved, hurts and distress accumulate, distressing behaviors become chronic, and it becomes easy to see why many people think humans are basically dumb, lazy, irresponsible, and violent.

The good news comes from another aspect of our inherent nature: We have a natural, built-in mechanism, call it emotional discharge, for healing from the effects of hurt.



Biopsychiatry has all the trappings of language that we associate with scientific medicine — it has the language, but not the science. It is necessary to be clear that psychiatry is not about medicine; it is really about social control.

This healing is accomplished by releasing the effects of the hurt. We discharge hurt and loss by crying. We discharge frustration and insult by angry storming, and release fright by shaking, trembling and sweating, etc. By releasing these distressing emotions, we restore ourselves to our natural intelligence, vitality and loving. We are then able to reconsider and stop living from the unresolved past hurts.

Psychological healing, then, is mostly about finding a safe place and safe people to support the natural process of facing hurts, releasing painful emotion, and letting these things go. This allows an individual to have attention in present time, and to live more and more in the presence of one's own true nature.

Janet Foner, an international leader on issues of mental health system oppression within the Re-evaluation Counseling Community, explains that psychiatry's view on "mental illness" is really a failure to understand the above principles. In her words: There is no such thing as "going crazy." You can't "lose your mind." What is "mental illness" really? It's a very long "session" seeking discharge or having lots of discharge, without a counselor.

There is one other very important factor to consider, especially with the faces of severe distress, what psychiatry calls "severe mental illness." Though it is a great error to primarily define us as biological or genetic beings, our physicality must be honored and cared for. A host of physical conditions (e.g., blood sugar imbalance, thyroid dysfunction, brain tumor, allergic responses, nutritional deficiency, and so on) can and do cause psychiatric symptoms. It is important to address the physical level of our well-being.

On Biological Psychiatry

Now, I want to provide the information necessary to understand the misguided beliefs, and subsequent harmful practices of psychiatry. As there are millions of homeless people in this country, and as "mental illness" is purported to be a major cause of homelessness, I will focus on how psychiatry treats homeless people. Know, however, that the principles apply to everyone.

Our mental health system today is almost entirely guided by a very specific belief system, called biological psychiatry (biopsychiatry). Therefore, the assumptions of biopsychiatry have had an enormous impact on modern life.

Modeled after the practice of medicine, biopsychiatry has all the trappings of language that we associate with scientific medicine. Biopsychiatry has the language, but not the science. To understand psychiatry today, it is necessary to be very clear that it is not about medicine; it is really about social control. The basic assumptions of biopsychiatry are as follows:

1) Adjustment to society is good.

2) Failure to adjust is the result of "mental illness."

3) "Mental illness" (depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, etc.) is a medical disease.

4) "Mental illness" is the result of biological and/or genetic defects.

5) "Mental illness" is chronic, progressive, and basically incurable.

6) "Mental illness" can (and must) be controlled primarily by drugs; secondarily, and for really severe "mental illness," by electroshock.

7) People with "mental illness" are irrational, and unable to make responsible decisions for themselves; therefore, coercion is necessary and justified.

These false beliefs provide the rationale for a coercive "final solution," a logically inevitable expression of a dangerous and distorted worldview. Psychiatry supports and defends the power structure, values, practices and appearances of the status quo; it looks at the world and selects out "defective" individuals for "treatment."

In effect, psychiatry performs a great magic trick. Once an individual is "selected," then everyone is absolved of responsibility. The individual can't help it; he or she is "mentally ill." Everyone else, including society as a whole, is absolved from responsibility. Social justice issues become irrelevant since the problem is said to reside in the defective biology and genetics of the afflicted "mentally ill" individual.

The citizen with civil rights becomes the incompetent patient in need of help "for their own good." Anger, dissatisfaction, indignation, and especially refusal to admit their "illness" and accept "treatment" (drugs), is called lack of insight and used as evidence that they are indeed "mentally ill." For example, the first question asked when a homeless "mentally ill" person is experienced as disturbed or disturbing, is: "Have you taken your medication today?"

Coercion and Control

As I discussed above, shame-based religion, behavioral psychology, and biopsychiatric views of human nature are not remotely compatible with my own. It makes absolutely no sense to glory in children if we arrive in the world empty-minded, or if our natures are essentially depraved, or if our problems are reducible to defective genetics and biology.

The Inquisition was a time when concerned religious folk used extraordinary means to save souls. It is understandable that many see either behavioral psychology or biological psychiatry as a vast improvement over the religion-based attempt to save souls by torture. By comparison, our move into the so-called age of enlightenment, the age of reason, seems a good one. Our faith changed direction, withdrew from religion, and invested in rational, scientific progress. The apparent progress left certain problematic social phenomena very intact.

Thomas Szasz, perhaps the greatest challenger of the false assumptions of biopsychiatry, coined an illuminative analogy about this transition from religion to science: "*The Inquisition is to heresy as Psychiatry is to mental illness.*"

Do you see the connection? Psychiatry replaced religion as society's primary non-judicial means of social control. Both institutions use knowledge not as information, but to define social power; heretics as witches, social challengers, misfits and homeless people as "mentally ill." From such worldviews that see people as inherently shameful or defective, coercion and control are completely justified, absolutely necessary.

Make no mistake about this business of psychiatry. It is a belief system, not a science. A large part of our nation has been so successfully conditioned that they believe problems in living are primarily caused by biologically or genetically based "mental illness."

We are seeing the results of this way of viewing the world: millions of our precious children on toxic drugs, at the behest of those who they expect to take care of them, and millions more of adults on similar drugs, euphemistically referred to as medication. The reader can be assured that a country does not deliberately drug millions of its children unless many more millions of adults are on drugs. It is hard to imagine anything as pathetic.

Mostly unconscious belief systems play a powerful determining role in how we perceive the world and how we respond to what we see. Grossly distorted perceptions of human nature, like that of biopsychiatry, lead to great harm.

Since we act according to our beliefs, it is urgent that our beliefs be based in reality. Fortunately, the reality of human nature is really wonderful. Knowing our true nature, trusting in ourselves, ready to resist government psychiatry's false beliefs and coercion, and armed with a little information about the nature of psychological distress and emotional healing, we can move forward in a good direction.

Regarding homelessness, we can then do two things. One is to trust that inherent human nature is most excellent, and responsive to good will, good listening, and good support. Second is to restore our common sense and really tackle the issues of jobs and housing.

John Breeding, PhD, is a psychologist and director of a nonprofit organization called Wildest Colts Resources. His books, including the newly released *True Nature and Great Misunderstandings*, may be seen on his website, www.wildestcolts.com.

Drug Companies Turn 'Informed Consent' into a Sham

Pharmaceutical companies spend more on direct lobbying, front groups, and political advertising than any other industry. The industry has more than one lobbyist for every elected representative in Washington.

by Kathie Zatkin

A *New York Times* article by Eric Lichtblau entitled, "Huge case against big tobacco," made me realize that the parallels between tobacco companies and pharmaceutical companies may be too close for comfort. The difference is that no one, at least to my knowledge, has been forced to ingest tobacco; and no laws are being proposed to force greater numbers of persons to do so. Unlike psychotropic medications, forced tobacco use was never regarded as good social policy or standard medical treatment for any "condition."

Revelations about the "wonders" of hormone replacement therapy have finally begun to raise suspicions about other drugs. Although the alleged benefits of all drugs should be subjected to heightened scrutiny, the practice of deliberate deception, misleading reports, and conducting research with a knowing disregard for the subjects of that research, is starkest regarding psychotropic medication and research on persons labeled "mentally ill."

Lying to research subjects and the public about the dangers and results of drug research, the risks of participating in drug trials, and failing to reveal conflicts of interest between "independent researchers" and their funders — all that is only part of the pattern.

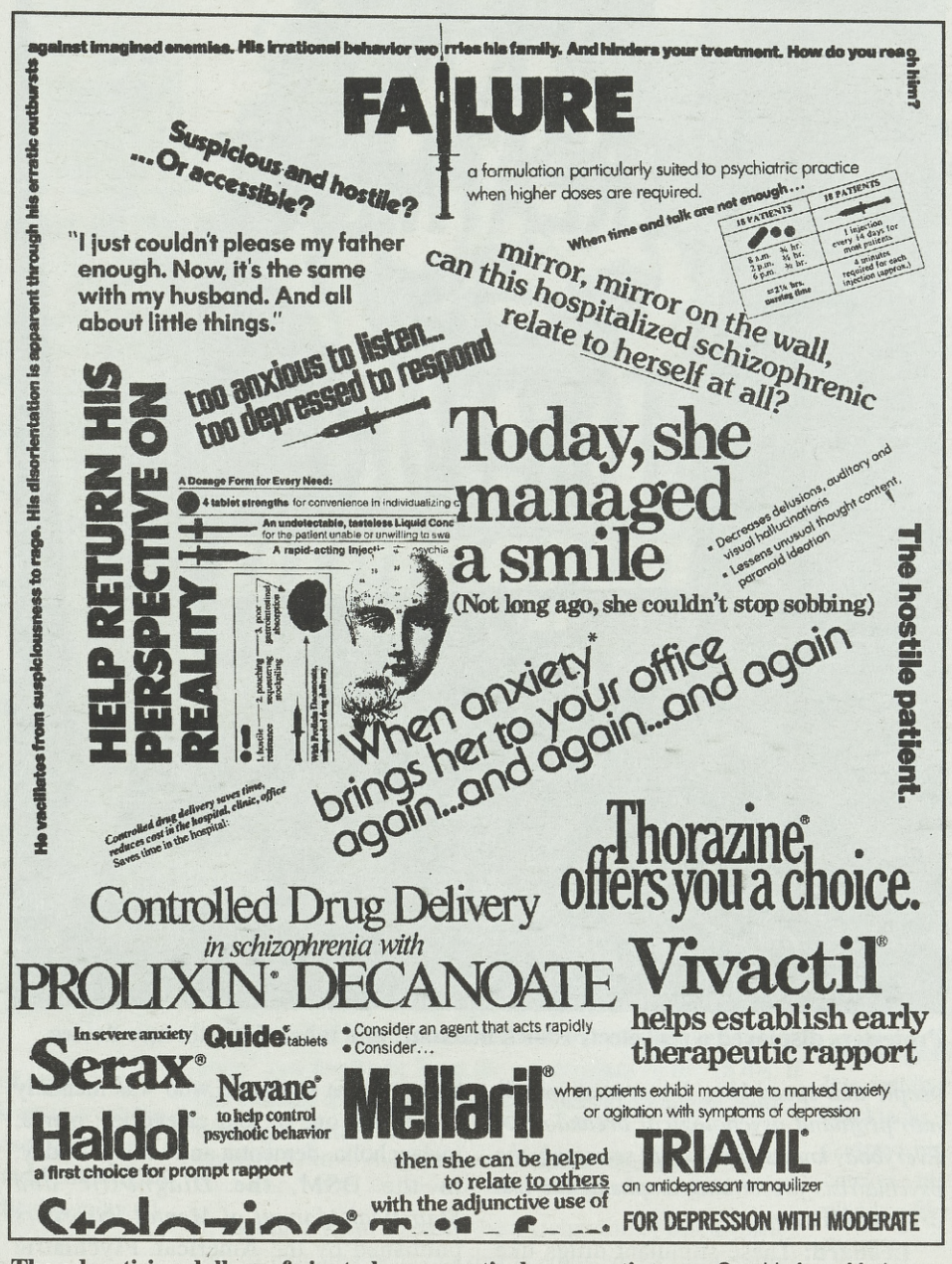
The risks associated with psychotropic medications continue to be minimized, while drug companies support a deliberate campaign to convince the public that persons who resist taking psychotropic medication do so, not because of the effects of the medication, but because the person lacks insight. Family members of persons diagnosed with "mental illness," many of whom are the strongest supporters of forced drugging laws, are an important part of this "campaign."

I fear that eventually the media will be forced to report quotations like the following: "I feel duped." "I was just a pawn of a multi-billion dollar industry. By trying to make life better for my child, I undoubtedly contributed to his physical and mental deterioration." "The drug companies knew we would do anything to help our son. Now it looks as though we signed away his body and his mind" (by allowing him to participate in drug company research while he was an outpatient and we were his conservators).

Despite mounting evidence of faulty research and biased reporting of research findings, the drug companies can assert that public pronouncements about the benefits of pharmaceuticals are free speech protected by the First Amendment. Pharmaceutical companies, which spend more on direct lobbying, front groups, and political advertising than any other industry (the industry has more than one lobbyist for every elected representative in Washington), are seldom questioned.

Regarding alleged conflicts of interest between funder and researcher, and in some cases guardians of research subjects, the drug companies maintain that these relationships are sacred and any governmental interference would severely infringe on the doctor-patient relationship.

Drug company spokespersons frequently expound this message: "The FDA already requires numerous safeguards to protect the public, particularly research subjects. This is the primary reason research is so costly (the FDA regulations); the public just doesn't understand."



The advertising dollars of giant pharmaceutical corporations push a barrage of mind-damaging substances on the public. Graphic from *Madness Network News Reader*

Last year the California Legislature passed and Governor Davis signed AB 2328, amending the Health and Safety Code to authorize additional persons to give surrogate informed consent for participation in medical experiments relating to cognitive impairment, lack of capacity or serious or life-threatening diseases and conditions of research participants. In other words, if you are found to lack the capacity to give informed consent, it is now easier for someone else to authorize your participation in certain types of medical research.

Robert Whitaker's book, *Mad in America*, reveals harsh truths about the extent of corruption in the field of psychiatric drug research [see "Mad in America," June 2003, Street Spirit]. After chronicling the historical course of (mis)treatment of the mentally ill, including the history of what qualified as "research," Whitaker reminds us that this is not only history, it is very recent practice.

The antipsychotic drugs ("atypicals") that came to market amid fanfare and acclaim in the early 1990s had been "tested" under new protocols. The modicum of independent testing that previously existed was replaced in the late 1980s by for-profit clinical trials. Academic research had been replaced by for-profit research. Drug companies got more and more control over the study design and therefore the results; clinical researchers and their research "institutions" got more and more money.

Whitaker describes an outrageous case involving the drug risperidone. Richard Borison and Bruce Diamond, faculty members at Georgia Medical College, hired only attractive female coordinators to literally solicit schizophrenic males to participate in their "study." After Borison and Diamond set up their own "research mill" named Clinical Therapeutics, these attractive study coordinators who lacked medical training were given broad decision-making powers as well as huge bonuses for enrolling participants. They "churned some patients through study after study," adjusted drug dosages and fudged eligibility criteria.

Although Borison and Diamond's clinical interest in the research appears minimal, their financial interest was significant. Whitaker describes the lavish lifestyle Borison and Diamond enjoyed and cites more than $5 million in cash and securities they stashed in various banks. Bribes to keep whistle-blowers quiet were also paid. Borison and Diamond eventually went to prison, but not for research fraud; their crime was stealing from the college.

Borison published "Recent Advances in the Pharmacotherapy of Schizophrenia" at about the same time he was indicted. Prior to receiving over 160 contracts from drug firms in the course of a decade and his eventual prison sentence, Borison had already received a significant 1984 public rebuke from the FDA for fabricating results about the supposed dangers of using generics in place of Thorazine.

As for the patients involved in the tests of these new atypicals, Whitaker reports that the FDA protocols approve of a testing technique which makes patients actively psychotic. "Washout" requires patients to be abruptly withdrawn from their current medications with the expectation that hallucinations and delusions will quickly return. Patients are then given a placebo, a standard/older drug, or the experimental/new one. Not surprisingly, research subjects were not informed about the "washout" effect. The overall suicide rate for patients involved in the trials, on a time-adjusted basis, was two to four times the norm for schizophrenics. [See *Mad in America* by Robert Whitaker, Perseus Publishing, pp. 261-270.]

Of course, drug companies continue to "stand by their research." Pharmaceutical corporations are actively engaged in marketing psychotropic medication, not only to the public via television and other mainstream media, but to all potential constituencies, including obstetricians, pediatricians, and genetic counselors, alleging that infants as young as six months could benefit from psychotropic medications.

Despite a few tiny bits of negative publicity, drug companies continue to profit. Drug companies even manipulate and expand the definitions of illness to their advantage. Under the headline, "Help for depression lacking, studies find," an article in the June 18, 2003, *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on a study that used "new clinical definitions to measure depression" and purportedly found far greater levels of depression than ever before reported. The *Chronicle* reported: "The study, whose lead authors are doctors at the AdvancePCS Center for Work and Health in Maryland, received funding from Eli Lilly & Co."

Eli Lilly is the manufacturer of the antidepressant drug Prozac.

Only two days later, the *Chronicle* published an article entitled: "Warning on prescribing Paxil for kids." According to this report, "No one under age 18 should be prescribed the drug Paxil for major depression because the adult anti-depressant may increase a child's risk of suicide, the government said Thursday." The article concluded that despite these warnings, "The company (GlaxoSmithKline) is seeking FDA approval to sell Paxil to treat another illness, obsessive-compulsive disorder, in children."

Tremendous weight gain, coupled with the significant increase in diabetes associated with the new anti-psychotic drugs would probably be unacceptable to the FDA if the target population for the drugs were not persons labeled mentally ill. Warnings would at least be more prominent and risks more emphatically reported. Patients who declined such "treatment" would not have their capacity to decline the "treatment" questioned.

Even if a "treating professional" does feel some concern about the risks associated with these drugs, polypharmacy has a handy remedy to assuage these feelings: Just add another drug or, if diabetes develops, just use a different anti-psychotic drug and continue the diabetes treatment. More and more drugs and related paraphernalia are marketed for diabetes; and once again, the definitions are changing so that greater numbers of persons are considered diabetic or "at risk" if "untreated."

Pharmaceutical companies know that doctors rely on drug company reports to make prescribing decisions. Patients are supposed to trust their health care provider to provide informed consent. How can a patient assess the risks and benefits of a proposed treatment when the prescribing provider receives continuing education credit from clinical faculty with drug company ties and drug information from drug company representatives?

Pharmaceutical companies have willing believers in their marketing claims and schemes. Federal and state governments have been active partners for years, touting drugs as a cheaper, better alternative to doctor visits. In the 1960s, the government also wanted to save money. Psychotropics were seen as an easy way to empty the state hospitals and provide a more "humane" type of ("community") care. Later on, medication, particularly psychotropics, became the standard when managed care came into the picture.

Today, politicians feel pressured to

See **Drug Company Propaganda** *page 19*

Electroconvulsive Brainwashing

from page 13

Ritalin and Adderol, for some reason, have a paradoxical effect that tends to space them out and calm them down and slow them down. So, instead of being their vibrant, youthful selves, they sort of just sit there and vegetate.

Spirit: *But teachers may support the use of drugs because the students become obedient and conform in class.*

Leonard: They're perceived as being "under control" and well-behaved, but what's really happening is that these kids are spaced out. They're not in a better position for learning, because their minds have been slowed down and they're not as receptive to ideas. In the long run it's going to worsen their ability to develop themselves intellectually.

Furthermore, these stimulant drugs are like the speed sold on the street! The only difference is that with the stimulant drugs there's a lot of money being made by the drug companies; and the quality of the speed is much better than what you might expect to get if you were to purchase the speed from your local drug pusher. When you get it from the certified drug pusher — the psychiatrist or pediatrician or the regular medical doctor — you can be pretty sure that the quality of the drug is good.

But the quality of the drug doesn't change what it does to you; and what stimulant drugs do to you is stunt your growth. They tend to make you very jittery and restless and can cause nightmares and dizziness. It also has an effect on your growing brain. For young people, the brain will continue to develop until maturity. Stimulant drugs are capable of stunting your brain development. This is a terrible thing to *impose upon a young person!*

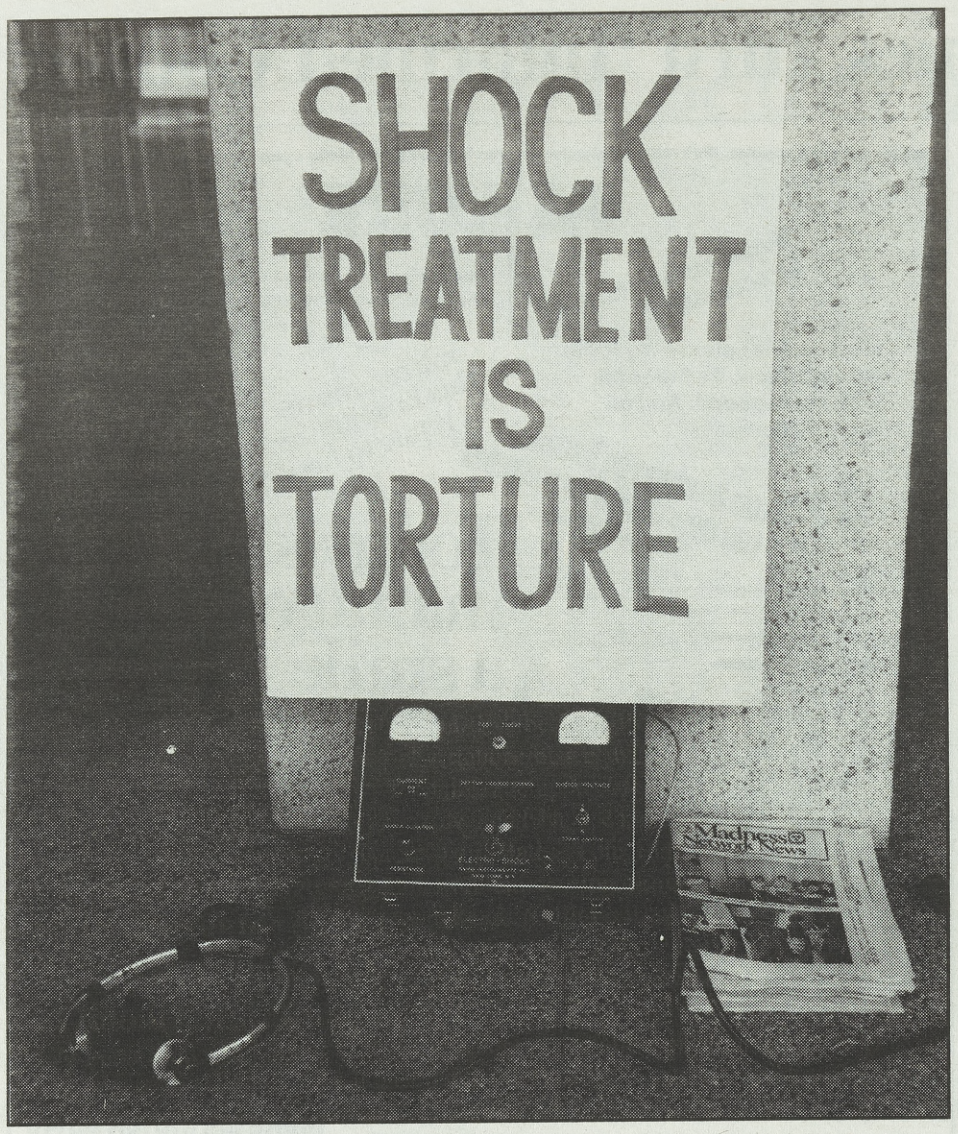
It's also a gateway drug in the sense that children who are put on these drugs at an early age are much more likely to get involved in a drug lifestyle, whether they are drugged with street drugs or psychiatric drugs. That seems to be the pattern; it's not so easy to go off these drugs. The tendency is for kids, once they start on these drugs, to graduate, once they become adolescents, to another form of psychiatric drugs. Or if they're not getting the psychiatric drugs they want, they will experiment with alcohol and other kinds of drugs available on the street.

Spirit: *This is the forced drugging of a generation — a vast social experiment that will have unforeseen consequences.*

Leonard: These young kids are being set up to be chronic mental patients. And we're not talking about a handful of troublesome kids. I've seen estimates of from two to eight million children who are on either stimulant drugs, antidepressant drugs, or a drug like lithium. That's a catastrophe in terms of what it's going to do to the upcoming generation. What is going to happen to these people who are drugged out when they become adults? Are they going to be able to lead meaningful lives and make a real contribution to society when their development has been stunted and they have become addicted to these drugs?

Spirit: *Withdrawal from either speed or Ritalin is very difficult because these drugs are highly addictive. Many people say it's equally hard to withdraw from other psychiatric drugs.*

Leonard: Ritalin and other stimulant drug are labeled by the FDA as Schedule II drugs, with high abuse potential and high risk of addiction. They are very, very dangerous; that's why you have to get a prescription for them.



Protesters displayed a real electroshock machine, and labeled it a torture device.

Spirit: *Even the counterculture warned people that speed kills. It can push people into profound psychological breakdowns. Everybody knows that, except seemingly the psychiatrists prescribing amphetamine-like drugs to children.*

Leonard: These stimulant drugs like Ritalin are very much like cocaine in terms of their chemical structure. For a medical expert to have placed before him a child on cocaine and another child on Ritalin, he would be hard-pressed to distinguish between the two because their effects are so similar.

David Cohen, a professor of social work at Florida International University, Miami, stated: "The fate of a psychotropic drug in society has much less to do with its known, observable effects than with how medical and legal authorities choose to treat it. Witness the radically dissimilar fates of two substances with virtually identical effects, methylphenidate (Ritalin) and cocaine. One is prescribed to pre-schoolers as safe and even life-saving; the other is shunned as demonic. Witness also the behind-the-scenes revival of amphetamines: shunned three decades ago as addictive and dangerous, today the most frequently prescribed stimulant to children and adults, though not a single new fact about their pharmacology has emerged." [from the journal, *Ethical Human Sciences and Services*, Fall-Winter, 2001.]

So what we're doing is creating a drug-oriented society, and one of the major reasons for that is that it's so damn profitable. The Declaration of Independence talks about our being endowed with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But today it seems more accurate to say that the pursuit of profit has replaced the pursuit of happiness. And if life and liberty have to be sacrificed for profit, then so much the worse for them.

Spirit: *Society seems to becoming more intolerant of the natural spectrum of human emotions and behavior and imposing more rigid social controls and prescribing ever more drugs.*

Leonard: Phillipe Pinel, a French psychiatrist, is considered one of the fathers of modern psychiatry and the "liberator of the mentally ill." He removed the chains and straitjackets from patients and brought about major reforms at the time of the French Revolution. At that time, he believed that everyone who was mentally ill fell into one of four categories: mania, melancholia, dementia and idiocy. Today, in the DSM, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association, there are upwards of 400 different categories of mental illness. It's increased a hundred-fold since Pinel's time!

What they're doing is greatly expanding the areas where psychiatrists can intervene, in order to justify the control of people who step out of line or who have fallen out of line, people who are no longer fitting in. It's kind of scary when you think about it; but the main purpose of all these diagnoses is to justify involuntary governmental intervention into the lives of people who haven't broken any laws — they're just disruptive.

We have the criminal justice system, which is sort of an oxymoron; and then the psychiatric system which locks up people and puts them into prison as a way of punishing and controlling them — and also as an object lesson to other people in the community. Because virtually everyone in our society knows that if they step too far out of line, it could happen to them as well. The could be locked up and they could be forcibly drugged or even given shock treatments. That has a very sobering, chilling effect on people's conduct and behavior; and it tends to make people go along with whatever is happening, rather than rock the boat.

Spirit: *Society seems to be imposing a rigid, corporate model of human personality. Corporations need obedient employees who can follow orders and conform socially. There are more and more social controls to ensure people behave that way, beginning in the school system.*

Leonard: These drugs in the short term will have that kind of effect on people. What it does to their humanity is another thing altogether, because it makes it much more difficult to be spontaneous and creative. So, in the short term, it's producing the desired effect by making people more machine-like. But in the long run, it's creating a population of zombies and robots and psychiatric drug junkies. That's what we're becoming, and it's affecting millions and millions of people. What kind of society are we moving towards? Is this an improvement? Are we really solving our problems? Or are we avoiding the real personal and social issues that things like drugs and involuntary commitment mask over?

Spirit: *It's been called the "medicalization of human suffering." Psychiatry pushes the medical model of mental illness. Emotional and psychological issues are medicalized and turned into supposed brain disease. So people are drugged instead of given therapy or emotional support.*

Leonard: Part of the problem is that psychiatrists see themselves as medical doctors. So if they think of themselves as doctors, they have to be treating disease.

Spirit: *And giving people pills or performing surgery.*

Leonard: And wearing white coats. It makes them look like doctors because they're prescribing pills. This makes them feel good about themselves and it also covers over the real role that psychiatrists play in our society, which is that they're agents of social control. The public goes along with it because they assume that if doctors are doing it, it's got to be okay.

Doctors are one of the highest-prestige professions in Western society, just like the priests were during the Middle Ages. Each and every one of the Inquisitors was a priest first. And the public assumed that if the priests were doing it, it had to be good. People were being burned at the stake. This wasn't for punishment; this was a way of saving their souls. It was a small price to pay when you consider that otherwise they would have been damned to hell. And in our society, instead of being damned to hell, the worst thing that can happen to you is for you to become chronically insane. So from the psychiatrists' point of view, these drugs, as bad as the effects might be, are a lot better than suffering from incurable schizophrenia and mental disorder.

Spirit: *Hand in hand with the medicalization of human suffering is what might be called the "chemicalization of therapy." Every year, we see less real therapy, and more drugs prescribed. What role do the large profits that pharmaceutical companies make play in this whole scene of multiplying diagnoses and drugging larger sectors of the population?*

Leonard: The drug companies have profited enormously from what you call the "chemicalization of therapy." With 12 million on antidepressant drugs, you can imagine the kinds of profits they make.

Eli Lilly is the manufacturer of Prozac. At one point, I think that particular drug was bringing in $3 billion a year in revenues for Eli Lilly. Now that drug has been replaced by Zyprexa as a revenue-producer, one of the atypical antipsychotic drugs. The sales of that drug, based on the most recent quarterly reports, is upwards of one billion dollars; if you were to extend that out over the period of a year, the sales are about four billion dollars a year. That represents maybe a third of Eli Lilly's total revenue. So you can imagine the importance that drug plays in the bottom line of that corporation.

Everyone's heard of Prozac, but relatively few people have heard of Zyprexa, but Zyprexa is a huge seller. It's only been sold for eight or nine years, but it dominates the market. It sells for anywhere from 10 to 30 times as much as the old-style neuroleptic drugs. That's another reason for their widespread use these days.

Spirit: *Profits leveled off for the older neuroleptics like Thorazine and Haldol. Along comes Zyprexa and its negative side effects haven't had time to become evident yet, so they're able to sell it for so much more money as a wonder drug.*

Leonard: The revenues are tremendous. The reason why people are paying

See **Electroconvulsive Brainwashing** *page 18*

Poor Leonard's Almanack

by Leonard Roy Frank
Street Spirit July 2003

Understanding Psychiatry (Part III): *The Critics Speak*

[This is the third of a three-part series on psychiatry. "Part I: The Survivors Speak" was published in the May issue; "Part II): The Professionals Speak" was published in the June issue.]

1. A major difficulty was that psychosurgery [lobotomy], which mutilated irrevocably a part of the brain, was final. Not a dispensable part, such as the appendix, is removed, but an area essential to the human being — his personality — is forever destroyed.
FRANZ G. ALEXANDER (Hungarian-born U.S. psychoanalyst) and SHELDON T. SELESNICK (U.S. psychiatrist), *The History of Psychiatry*, 1966

2. Parents are typically told that Ritalin... is a "mild stimulant," "proven safe and effective in the treatment of ADHD" [Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder].... Parents are usually told nothing at all about the likelihood of growth suppression and brain atrophy with long-term stimulant drug use. They are not told that it affects virtually every organ system of the body, or that some children die; 160 Ritalin-related deaths were reported to the FDA between 1990 and 1997, mostly cardiovascular in nature.
JOHN BREEDING (U.S. psychologist) and FRED A. BAUGHMAN JR. (U.S. neurologist), "The Ethics of Informed Parental Consent to the Psychiatric Drugging of Children," *Ethical Human Sciences and Services*, Fall-Winter 2001

3. Psychiatry has unleashed an epidemic of neurologic disease on the world. Even if tardive dyskinesia were the only permanent disability produced by these drugs [i.e., neuroleptics, such as Thorazine, Haldol, and Prolixin], by itself, this would be among the worst medically-induced disasters in history.
PETER R. BREGGIN (U.S. psychiatrist), *Psychiatric Drugs: Hazards to the Brain*, 1983.

4. The only biochemical imbalances that we can identify with certainty in the brains of psychiatric patients are the ones produced by the psychiatric treatment itself.
PETER R. BREGGIN, *Toxic Psychiatry*, 1991

5. As far as the woman is concerned, psychiatry is an extraordinary confidence trick: the unsuspecting creature seeks aid because she feels unhappy, anxious and confused, and psychology persuades her to seek the cause in *herself*. The person is easier to change than the status quo which represents a higher value in the psychologists' optimistic philosophy. If all else fails, Largactil [marketed as Thorazine in the U.S.], shock treatment, hypnosis and other forms of "therapy" will buttress the claim of society.
GERMAIN GREER (Australian writer), "The Psychological Sell," *The Female Eunuch*, 1970

6. It seems to me perfectly in the cards that there will be within the next generation or so a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing... a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda, brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods.
ALDOUS HUXLEY (English writer), quoted in John Marks, *The Search for the "Manchurian Candidate": The CIA and Mind Control*, 1980

7. The dogma that "mental diseases are diseases of the brain" is a hangover from the materialism of the 1870s. It has become a prejudice which hinders all progress, with nothing to justify it.
CARL G. JUNG (Swiss psychiatrist), "General Aspects of Dream Psychology," 1916, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 1960.

8. Psychiatry can so easily be a technique of brainwashing, of inducing behavior that is adjusted, by (preferably) non-injurious torture. In the best places, where straitjackets are abolished, doors are unlocked, leucotomies largely forgone, these can be replaced by more subtle lobotomies and tranquilizers that place the bars of Bedlam and the locked doors *inside* the patient.
R. D. LAING (British psychiatrist), preface (1964) to *The Divided Self*

9. Doctors in all ages have made fortunes by killing their patients by means of their cures. The difference in psychiatry is that it is the death of the soul.
R. D. LAING, "The Obvious," published in David Cooper, editor, *The Dialectics of Liberation*, 1968

10. The growing protests of survivors of involuntary psychiatric confinement and treatment are... a contemporary expression of the spirit of freedom and the desire for democratic change. These survivors are rising against their oppressors with no less vigor of spirit and no less moral and political justification than the oppressed citizens of modern totalitarian states.
RONALD LEIFER (U.S. psychiatrist), "Introduction: The Medical Model as the Ideology of the Therapeutic State," *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, Summer-Autumn 1990

11. Of all tyrannies a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.... Their very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be 'cured' against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level with those who have not yet reached the age of reason..
C. S. LEWIS (English writer), "The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment," *God in the Dock*, 1970

Psychiatry has unleashed an epidemic of neurologic disease on the world. Even if tardive dyskinesia were the only permanent disability produced by these drugs by itself, this would be among the worst medically-induced disasters in history. — Peter Breggin

12. After a few sessions of ECT the symptoms are those of moderate cerebral contusion, and further enthusiastic use of ECT may result in the patient functioning at a subhuman level. Electroconvulsive therapy in effect may be defined as a controlled type of brain damage produced by electrical means.... In all cases the ECT "response" is due to the concussion-type, or more serious, effect of ECT. The patient "forgets" his symptoms because the brain damage destroys memory traces in the brain, and the patient has to pay for this by a reduction in mental capacity of varying degree.
SIDNEY SAMENT (U.S. neurologist), letter to *Clinical Psychiatry News*, March 1983

13. The point is not that psychiatric diagnoses are meaningless, but that they may be, and often are, swung as semantic blackjacks: cracking the subject's respectability and dignity destroys him just as effectively, and often more so, as cracking his skull. The difference is that the man who wields a blackjack is recognized by everyone as a public menace, but one who wields a psychiatric diagnosis is not.
THOMAS S. SZASZ (Hungarian-born U.S. psychiatrist), *Ideology and Insanity: Essays on the Psychiatric Dehumanization of Man*, 1970

14. Involuntary mental hospitalization is like slavery. Refining the standards for commitment is like prettifying the slave plantation. The problem is not how to improve commitment, but how to abolish it.
THOMAS S. SZASZ, "Mental Hospitalization," *The Second Sin*, 1973

15. By definition, diseases are afflictions of the body; hence, afflictions of the mind, called "mental illnesses," are not real diseases; and if, as many people now claim and seemingly believe, mental illnesses are brain diseases then they ought to be treated by neurologists.
THOMAS S. SZASZ, "Parity or Prevarication?" *Ideas on Liberty*, March 2003

16. In 1941 the psychiatric institution Hadamar [in Germany] celebrated the cremation of the ten thousandth mental patient in a special ceremony. Psychiatrists, nurses, attendants, and secretaries all participated. Everybody received a bottle of beer for the occasion.
FREDRIC WERTHAM (German-born U.S. psychiatrist), referring to German psychiatry's World War II "euthanasia" program during which, according to Wertham, 275,000 people said to be mentally ill, mentally retarded, and physically disabled, were killed, *A Sign for Cain: An Exploration of Human Violence*, 1966

Poetry by Psychiatric Survivors

Compiled by Leonard Roy Frank

Eulogy to the Back Wards People

And I heard agony and pain... wailing.
And I saw death and rain and nobody caring... and locks.
And I tried to see out past darkness past nothing.
I thought dancing and holding hands and hugging.
But I couldn't see and I couldn't think.
Then they handed me the pills...
And I wept softly.
LUCY J. BENNETT, "Eulogy to the Back Wards People," published in *Madness Network News Reader*, 1974

ECT Suite

Of all words, they use suite.
A set of rooms you go through
waiting room, ECT room, waking-up room;
Then you get offered
a cup of tea and biscuits in the "after-room."
You go in feeling like your brain is going to be taken away.
You come out into the after-room and say to the volunteer woman helper, "I feel like my brain's been taken away."
She says,
"Would you like another biscuit, dear?"
CHARLOTTE THORNTON, "ECT Suite," *The Altered State*, 1995

ECT [ECT: the initials for electroshock]

Expert in public propaganda
They go to work on me, convinced
of euphemism. Sure of number.
Determined both will burn the terror
Splashed upon my face.
They try out some occupational
tricks... Experiment.
They think it clever to baptize torture with initials.
They think it subtle to call it "treatment."
They talk of cures
Reciting tales of miraculous salvation.
I don't buy it.
I've seen the disaster, the mistakes.
I call it electrocution.
NIRA FLEISCHMAN, "ECT," 1985, published in Bonnie Burstow and Don Weitz, editors, *Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada*, 1988. The poet committed suicide after undergoing electroshock.

This is the Psycho, the
home of the buzz and the prod,
Where the electric shock patients
speak only to the insulins
The insulins only to God.
ANONYMOUS PATIENT, published in a mental-hospital newspaper, 1950s.

Sob Twenty-Three

(Right Out of the Baiting of Job)

The Asylum is my shepherd,
Though I shall not be cajoled.
Through eerie green halls you pilot me
Where you preserve me on ice,
With tranquilizing drugs you bloat me,
To dull my searching psyche.
Though I walk through the Valium of derangement
No Elavil will I fear.
You are there with your peals of Thorazine
And your bolts of Stelazine,
I am on the right pathology.
You isolate one for shock treatment before my eyes
In full sight of my fellow chronics,
You anoint my head with lice-killer,
My medicine cup runneth over.
Surely, your protective wings
And your knowing ways
Shall tyrannize me here,
All the days of my life.
I will nod in the bastions of the buried alive
All the eons that I rot.
TULLIA TESAURO, "Sob Twenty-Three (Right Out of the Baiting of Job)," *Madness Network News Reader*, 1974

Electroconvulsive Brainwashing

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more for Zyprexa is that the drug is claimed to be as effective or more effective than the old-style neuroleptics, and with fewer side effects. The truth of the matter is that the side effects are very similar in some ways.

There may be less tardive dyskinesia with the atypical antipsychotic drugs; but what you have with the atypicals and especially Zyprexa, is tremendous weight gain, and accompanying the weight gain is diabetes — a life-shortening disease. One study indicated that three percent of people taking the atypical antipsychotic drugs developed diabetes over a six-week period. But these drugs are not just being given for six weeks; they're given for months and years. You can imagine the long-term effects that has on the human body.

One of the worst problems is called neuroleptic malignant syndrome, which involves rigidity, fevers, seizures and confusion. It can result in sudden death. Robert Whitaker, in *Mad In America*, estimated that between 1960 and 1980, when people were not being informed about this risk of neuroleptic malignant syndrome, upwards of 100,000 human beings died as a result of this one symptom.

Spirit: *Whitaker also reported that the huge profits give pharmaceutical companies power to influence the outcomes of drug tests, corrupt university research into drugs, and buy influence from the American Psychiatric Association.*

Leonard: The effect of all this money flooding into the coffers of pharmaceutical houses is very corrupting, not only to the shareholders and corporations, but to psychiatrists and the whole mental health system. Because with these tremendous profits, pharmaceutical companies are able to buy off the people who might otherwise challenge the use of these drugs.

They're able to influence the psychiatric profession directly because they advertise so heavily in psychiatric journals. They pay psychiatrists for the research they do in helping to get their drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration. They sponsor psychiatric meetings. They give honorariums to psychiatrists who will tout their products. So the corrupting effect is tremendous. The psychiatrists and the pharmaceutical houses really work hand-in-glove with each other. I call it the psychiatric-pharmaceutical complex. It's a very, very powerful force in our society. It's a very dangerous force, and all the more so because it is not recognized as a threat to liberty.

Spirit: *Most people are unaware of its power, scope and influence?*

Leonard: Yes, people just are not aware of it as being any kind of problem. People just go along with it because psychiatry and the mental-health belief system is equivalent to a secular religion. People don't challenge these ideas. They assume that it's the truth. It's the premise that you start your argument from; you don't challenge these premises.

People believe in it; they hold onto it because it provides them with two of the things you really need in our society, when you have problems with people undergoing changes. There has to be hope for them that things will get better. The psychiatrists provide hope in terms of their coming up with new pseudo-medical procedures that are supposedly going to benefit them and cure them of their so-called "diseases."

The second thing psychiatry provides is absolution. Whenever you have problems amongst people, there are bound to be other people related to them who feel guilty for their loved ones having these problems. Parents feel guilty about their children having problems. Psychiatrists come along and they say, "This is not your problem. You didn't cause it. These problems are caused by faulty genes or a chemical imbalance or a brain disorder of some sort."

So this is their way of absolving them of responsibility. Right away, when parents hear something like that, they immediately feel good about themselves. So they go to the psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist is in the same role as the priest in absolving people of their guilt feelings. And it works. Those are two of the major reasons for the widespread popularity of the institution of psychiatry. It plays a very, very important role in society, in addition to being a social-control force.

Spirit: *Psychiatry was a social-control force in years past by widespread incarceration of hundreds of thousands in state hospitals. With deinstitutionalization, it's not as easy to confine someone for abnormally long periods of time. Does that mean there is a lessening of psychiatry's power as a social-control mechanism?*

Leonard: There are still many forms of forced treatment. With involuntary outpatient treatment, which we talked about before, instead of your being in the mental hospital, the mental hospital is placed inside your head. You can be just as restricted on chemical restraints as if you were locked up on the psychiatric ward.

But I don't even like that term, "deinstitutionalization." It's really *trans*-institutionalization. People have been shifted from one institution to another kind of institution. For instance, the state hospitals used to be crowded with elderly people. Now those same individuals who would have gone to state hospitals 30 and 40 years ago end up in nursing homes. In nursing homes, 50 to 60 percent of the people who reside in them are on one or another kind of psychiatric drug.

Many people also have been transferred to board-and-care homes, some of which can serve as mini-state hospitals, in terms of the restrictions placed on the individual. In order to stay in some of these board-and-care homes, you have to be taking a psychiatric drug, just as if you were in a state hospital, you would be forced to take a psychiatric drug.

Spirit: *Why do you think forced psychiatric treatment is unethical?*

Leonard: Well, forced treatment is fundamentally wrong as a denial of freedom without due process of law. It's against the spirit of the U.S. Constitution. And the French Declaration of the Rights of Man from 1789 — this was the document which helped initiate the French Revolution — states that liberty is the right to do whatever you want to do so long as you don't harm others.

When you lock someone up on the basis of what he or she thinks, you're really instituting a kind of preventive detention. You're saying the person may be dangerous; but a person shouldn't be denied their freedom on suspicion of being dangerous. They should only be denied their freedom when they are found guilty of breaking the law and actually hurting other people. A basic principle of freedom is being violated by each and every kind of involuntary psychiatric lock-up.

That's why it's really a perversion of the justice system in our society that there are literally millions of people who are denied their freedom for long or short periods of time on the say of a psychiatrist who is theorizing that a certain person might be difficult or might cause some kind of trouble or might be dangerous. And while locked up, they can be forcibly given drugs; they can be denied their rights to communicate and to move about freely; they can have their mail opened without their consent.

There are many, many restrictions placed on people living in institutions, especially these days when so many people in psychiatric facilities are mixed in with people who are penal-code offenders. Many innocent people are put into mental hospitals on the basis of their supposedly being dangerous. And when psychiatrists talk about people as being dangerous, it's just because the person has socially unacceptable ideas or conduct. That's not a just basis for denying an individual his freedom or denying any of his rights.

Spirit: *Yet California politicians keep trying to expand the reasons for which we can impose forced treatment on people.*

Leonard: Well, I think that's just an attempt to drive the homeless people into psychiatric treatment of one kind or another. It's a way of punishing them, and a way of controlling them, and a way of getting them out of sight, because the homeless are very problematic to conventional members of society who don't want to have them around. They're very annoying to them. It's not good for business and not good for profits. So the more people you can put into this psychiatric compartment, the easier it is to maintain law and order in the community, supposedly; and the easier it is to keep the people who are powerful in our society pleased with the way the system is operating.

Spirit: *Many efforts to expand forced psychiatric treatment are aimed directly at homeless people. Everything homeless people do is on public display, and is criminalized. Someone grappling with an emotional issue in the privacy of their home is not as likely to be subjected to forced psychiatric treatment as a homeless person going through emotional turmoil on the streets.*

Leonard: Yes, because when you're on the street, you're very, very visible. And people don't like you by virtue of the fact that you are obviously a homeless person. There's a tremendous prejudice against homeless people, just like there's a tremendous prejudice against people who are labeled mentally ill. You combine those two prejudices and you have a person who is doubly stigmatized, and it's a very, very difficult label to bear.

Spirit: *Since insulin comas were used to destroy your spiritual and political insights, it seems important to take a closer look at what you were studying in those days, and recapture the very ideas that psychiatry tried to eradicate. What impact did Gandhi's autobiography have on you?*

Leonard: It just opened me up to a lot of things that I'd never given any thought to — spirituality and nonviolence and civil disobedience. Prior to that time, I think of my life as having been two-dimensional; with the reading of Gandhi, it became three-dimensional, and with further reading, in technicolor as well.

Spirit: *You hadn't had strong spiritual leanings before?*

Leonard: None whatsoever. No interest at all in that area. Gandhi's book opened me up to another area of life which was not even on my radar screen.

With Gandhi, the emphasis was on active nonviolent resistance to social injustice. I glommed on to that one, because back in 1960 I had just never heard of that idea. He was able to use this idea in a very practical way, leading ultimately to the independence movement and the liberation of India from the British Empire.

Gandhi said, "Exploitation is the essence of violence." From this it follows that not exploiting others is the essence of nonviolence. This principle of not taking advantage of others is central to my code of conduct, as it was to Gandhi's.

Gandhi was a vegetarian not only for health reasons, but for moral reasons. This is tied in with the Indian idea of *ahimsa* which means not causing harm, or harmlessness. He realized that the treatment of animals for food production was a very cruel method, and that for that reason alone we should be kind to animals as well as to human beings.

Spirit: *These ideas were not only new to you. Back in 1960 there weren't many people talking about pacifism, nonviolent social change, and vegetarianism.*

Leonard: Not that I can remember (laughing). Not at all. Another interesting thing about Gandhi, and this had a big influence on the way I was going to begin conducting my life, is that he spoke about his "experiments with truth." That was something that I adopted for myself almost immediately, and I realized I was going to have to examine my ideas and do a lot of experimenting to find out what was really going to be valid and workable in my own life, and that involved a lot of trying out of new ideas. So then I really started to get interested in the books that he had spoken of in his autobiography.

Spirit: *One of Gandhi's strongest influences was Henry David Thoreau.*

Leonard: And the *Bhagavad Gita* (the Hindu scriptures), as well. So I read the *Bhagavad Gita* and I read Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. It was from Thoreau that Gandhi got the ideas of nonviolence and non-cooperation.

One of Thoreau's important principles was that an individual who was determined to do the right thing should never associate with a government or any other institution which was unjust. He believed that he shouldn't associate with the American government at that time, in the late 1840s, because the government supported the institution of slavery; it was a slaveholder's government. Thoreau said that you couldn't associate with such a government without disgrace. He also thought the Mexican-American War was an unjust war and in protest against the war, he refused to pay his personal tax, and he was put in jail for that.

Spirit: *It's interesting that it was through Gandhi, a devout Hindu, that you became interested in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Gandhi revered the teachings of Jesus.*

Leonard: Gandhi was very inspired by the New Testament and the life of Jesus. I felt it would be wiser on my part to read the Old Testament before I got into the New Testament because the New Testament was based on the Old Testament, with some very important changes. So I read the Old Testament first and I was very impressed with the life and teachings of Moses and the prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos.

Spirit: *How did the message of the prophets shape your thinking?*

Leonard: Their general message was that if the goal and purpose of life is to become one with God, the way to do that is through the way we live our lives. If we live our lives in a way that is oppressive to other people, if we exploit others, if we rob them and take advantage of them, then that is a transgression. It is that which prevents us from getting close to the higher spiritual power. It is that primary teaching which seemed to be emphasized over and over again in the teachings of the prophets. They didn't care a whole lot about the ritualistic aspects of the religion. The prophets got down to the major issues, the essentials, which is leading a good life, a holy life, one that is based not only on devotion, but on deeds as well.

Spirit: *Especially on doing justice to the poor. That was of central importance in all of the four prophets you mentioned.*

Leonard: Social justice, and not merely avoiding evil, but doing good and helping others and being righteous. Pursuing justice. They didn't just say "allow justice to happen." They said, "justice, justice, thou shalt pursue." That's an extremely impor-

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tant principle. Where there is injustice, religion is a farce. You can have all the church-going and synagogue-going you could want, but unless people live a righteous life the rest of the week, attendance at religious services is virtually meaningless. It's just a waste of time. You have to combine devotion and deeds together.

Spirit: *The Sermon on the Mount was a major influence on Gandhi's dedication to nonviolence.*

Leonard: Well, certainly. The teachings about being a peacemaker — there's the essence of nonviolence. We have a responsibility to make peace wherever we can to bring about a just society. We can't have a just society in a warlike situation, in a military situation. Without peace, there can be no justice; and without justice, there can be no peace.

Jesus' sayings about being merciful and that those who are merciful will receive mercy — that was a step up from the Old Testament. The emphasis in the New Testament is somewhat different from what you find in the Old Testament. It's a question of emphasis. And here the emphasis is on loving one's neighbor, and not only one's neighbor as you have in the Old Testament, but loving one's enemy. Now that really was a new ideal; something that hadn't been heard before. Jesus was a fantastic human being, and many people feel that his teachings have been betrayed in terms of the failure of people to practice his ideas.

Spirit: *You said that another book that influenced you greatly was Joseph Campbell's* Hero with a Thousand Faces.

Leonard: The theme of his book was what Campbell called the "monomyth." He brought together the teachings from a host of myths from various cultures across time and geography, which he said represented the development of the individual and of the entire species. He saw this monomyth as a three-step process: separation, initiation, and return. The individual decides it's time to pull back from everyday life and reevaluate his or her life. To do that, you really need to take some time out. You can't be fully occupied in the world. You're trying to transcend the world, at least for a time. That period of time is what I call the transition or transformation period.

Spirit: *That's what you went through in withdrawing within yourself to explore Gandhi, Thoreau and Jung.*

Leonard: It's during that period when the individual confronts himself at the deepest level. He begins to pay attention to the inner processes and to his dreams; he begins to rethink his values and the important events of his life. He tries to get a sense of where his life is headed. All along the way, he comes in closer contact with the deepest forces within, forces of a spiritual nature. Some people would think of it as a way of being in contact with God.

At some point during this period of separation, there is experienced a kind of initiation, a sense that you've achieved a certain level of growth and awareness, and it's time to return to the workaday world. You have learned certain things about yourself and about the spiritual realm; and you want to share that with other people to assist them in their growth.

The powers that be will resist this. I think Campbell used the term "Holdfast" to epitomize the forces that are waiting to prevent your bringing back to others your experience, because that would represent a threat to the status quo. "Holdfast" wants the status quo to remain in place because "Holdfasts" — whether in the form of parents or government figures or CEOs or religious leaders — don't want to have any dramatic changes. They're getting along very, very well. And they perceive you as a threat to their interests, and they'll do what they can to stop you.

Spirit: *In your case, "Holdfast" incarcerated you and used insulin coma to literally erase what you had learned.*

Leonard: This is where I think psychiatry plays the role of "Holdfast" in our society. Psychiatry wants to prevent this inward search from happening. They deny any value at all to myths. The very notion of withdrawal — they even have, as a major symptom of schizophrenia, the word "withdrawal." When you pull back from society for a while, and you don't associate with other people all that much, they call that withdrawal, and it's a major symptom of schizophrenia.

Spirit: *Mainstream psychiatry also tends to be very intolerant of dreams, visions, fantasies and mystical states.*

Leonard: Well, they regard all of that as delusional, as an escape from reality. They themselves haven't experienced anything like that; and they don't believe that anyone else can experience something like that in any meaningful way. To them, what is a spiritual experience can be defined as a psychotic episode.

What they regard as schizophrenia, others with a spiritual turn of mind would think of as mysticism. Because they're in denial about God and spirituality. For psychiatrists, being scientifically oriented, being geared to think only in terms of a reality that can only be placed under a microscope, anything beyond that which is non-material has no reality, so they deny its significance altogether.

Spirit: *The psychiatrist Carl Jung was a major exception to that rule. He saw the great value of spirituality, mysticism, myth and religious symbols. He taught that no one could achieve psychological wholeness without a spiritual life.*

Leonard: He certainly was an exception — and look at how unpopular he is in mainstream psychiatry because of his ideas. As a matter of fact, he came up with ideas that psychiatrists would be horrified by. For example, he said, "We have forgotten the age-old fact that God speaks chiefly through dreams and visions."

Spirit: *That was the cornerstone of his vision of psychology. He saw the deep value of religious symbols and dreams and even of hallucinations, so-called.*

Leonard: Yes! Jung was a real problem, as far as psychiatrists were concerned. What psychiatrists call an hallucination, a religious person would speak of as a vision.

Spirit: *So Jung was another of your prime influences during this period?*

Leonard: Oh, definitely. Although I found some valuable teachings in Freud, nothing compared to the wisdom of Carl Jung. Even to this day, I still read Carl Jung's writings and am fascinated by them. And often I think I have a real understanding of Jung, but then I get into one of his books and realize that there are still things that I have not yet understood.

Spirit: *There is depth beyond depth in Jung, an immense mountain of insight.*

Frank: There is so much depth. Especially his memoir, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. That's just a marvelous book in explaining how he grew, how he had this relationship with Freud and then they split apart. And how he was cut off from the world and went through a period of withdrawal after his split with Freud. During that time he had to come up with new ideas to sustain him. It was during that time, particularly, that he became very interested in mythology, and in the hero's journey. He was a living example of the hero's journey.

Spirit: *Your own life journey is another example. You withdrew from society to reflect on deeper values, gained new insight, and came back to reshape your life. The powers that be put you through the nightmare of confinement. Yet you survived and went on to fight for the rights of others.*

Leonard: I saw it that way, in terms of my withdrawal. I often wondered what would have been the situation if I hadn't been locked up and assaulted with shock treatment, and how much further would I have progressed on that path if I had been allowed to follow it to its conclusion. And the return was forced upon me. I didn't willfully say, "Well, now I'm returning." The psychiatric police knocked on my door and I was locked up. I didn't go happily into the psychiatric institution. I was taken there by force. It was the power of the state that prevented me from continuing what I was doing, when I had not violated any law. This was a kind of preventive detention based on a psychiatrist's theory.

Spirit: *That's why you liken your ordeal to brainwashing, because the shock treatments erased years of study.*

Leonard: We talk about brainwashing as carried out by the Soviet government or the Chinese government during the Korean War; but we neglect to see the similarity between that style of brainwashing, and the brainwashing that had been carried out by psychiatrists long before that period. After all, shock treatment was introduced in the U.S. in the 1930s.

Spirit: *The Soviet Union sent political dissidents to psychiatric wards and used neuroleptic drugs to silence dissent.*

Leonard: They certainly used neuroleptic drugs on dissidents, and there were reports published widely in some of the better newspapers and journals about the horrific effects of these neuroleptic drugs on Soviet political dissidents.

It was clear that these drugs had a very dehumanizing effect and that they were experienced as torture by these prisoners; whereas, the same drugs were being administered to Americans in psychiatric institutions forcibly, against their will. Those cases were treated as though the individuals were actually benefiting from the drugs. The same psychiatric drugs that were considered to be harmful and torturous in the Soviet Union were considered to be beneficial and humane in this country.

The truth of the matter is that the effects in both countries were precisely the same: they have a dehumanizing effect on the individual. They lessen your ability to think, feel and act — in other words, your ability to be human. It's a form of psychiatric drug pacification.

Spirit: *How could the U.S. media deny the torturous effects of these drugs when they were reporting on those very effects experienced by Soviet dissidents?*

Leonard: We have what are called Holocaust deniers — people who claim that the Holocaust, the destruction of the Jewish people in Europe during World War II, never took place, or it happened on a much smaller scale than history reported. They're called Holocaust deniers. Today, we have psychiatric-atrocity deniers — people who are unwilling to recognize the harm caused by involuntary commitment and forced treatment, whether with drugs, electroshock or insulin shock. They're fooling themselves in just the same way the Holocaust deniers are. Maiming the brains of millions of Americans over the last 30 years with electroshock, lobotomy, and antipsychotic drugs is an atrocity, and forcing these drugs on children is an atrocity.

Drug Company Propaganda Misleads Public

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save money, protect the public, end homelessness and still be viewed as compassionate. Families are concerned about "disturbing behavior" and individuals are indeed suffering. No wonder the evidence that even those drugs marketed as 'second generation atypicals' (psychotropic drugs with supposedly fewer side effects) can be just as harmful as the older medications is barely whispered or kept under seal.

Entire health care systems are dependent on psychotropic medication compliance. In spite of a soaring budget deficit, a 2003-2004 major objective for Alameda County's Behavioral Health Care Services is: "Ensure that all eligible children and youth receive appropriate evaluation and treatment with psychotropic medications." Will the emphasis be on "appropriate evaluation" or "treatment with psychotropics"?

Ironically, the objective which follows is: "Increase by 20% services and activities to prevent the use of drugs and alcohol by children and youth in the communities of Alameda County." (County of Alameda Proposed Budget 2003-2004, A Citizen's Guide to the Budget, p. 21.)

More and more media rely on pharmaceutical corporate sponsors. Drug companies even benefit from competitors' drugs being marketed for the same purpose as their own. The drug companies correctly believe that such competition is good for the industry because the idea is to get the doctors to prescribe. Psychiatrists watch television and read trade magazines too.

Why aren't the so-called investigative reporters and TV shows exposing the drug companies? Could the reason be that almost every investigative news show is sponsored by one or more pharmaceutical companies? Look at your morning paper, Sunday inserts, and magazines. Do you see advertisements for drugs? Remember when tobacco advertising filled the airwaves and print media?

The use of medication to "treat" mental illness is regarded as a sacred cow. When will we realize that this "treatment" may really be more like the golden calf or perhaps the Trojan horse?

There is clearly a missionary zeal to embrace the belief that pharmaceuticals are safe and that research methodologies and reports are unbiased. It's much more palatable to believe that emotional "disease" and/or homelessness are the products of a broken brain, and that the proper remedy is medication, than to actually reflect upon the myriad causes of "disease" and the risks associated with this "treatment."

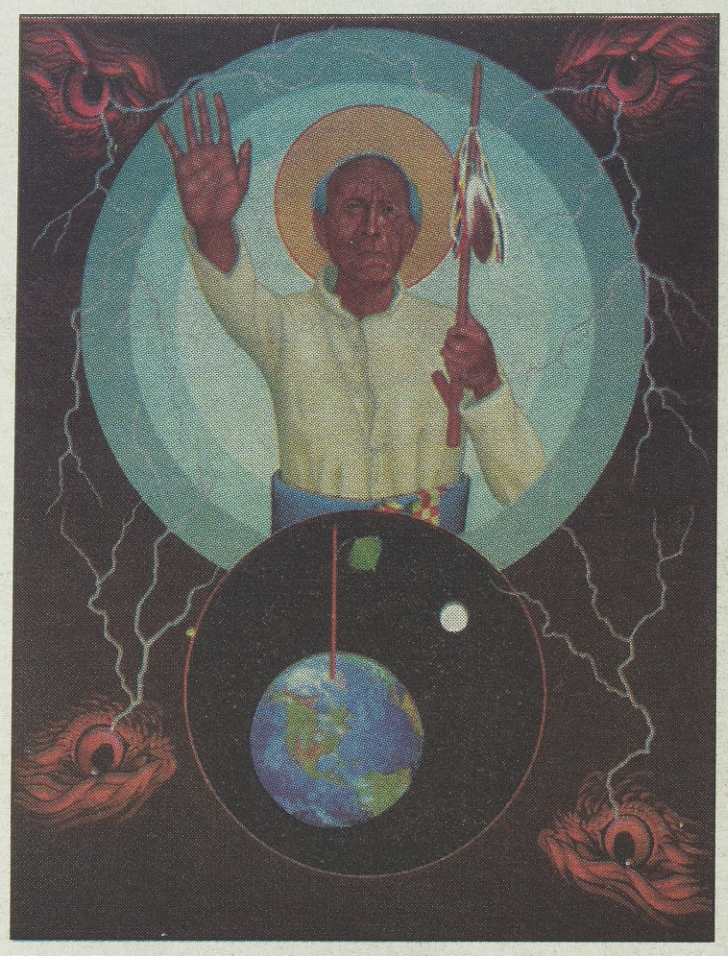
Drug companies have deep pockets, but federal and state governments and those acting in a fiduciary capacity should also be liable for any harms caused by the drugs that persons are forced or coerced to accept. We are all on notice. We must ensure that all persons have the right to fully informed consent and that others, even those who claim to be using the latest scientific methods, do not determine the amount of risk that is acceptable to another.

When will physicians, HMOs, elected officials, and those employed in public, private or public/private partnerships take the following pledge?

"I pledge to accept no money, gifts or hospitality from the pharmaceutical industry; to seek unbiased sources and not rely on information disseminated by drug companies, and to avoid conflict of interest in my practice, teaching and/or research." — from the physicians' No Free Lunch Pledge, published in *Hadassah Magazine*, June/July 2002.

Breakdown or Spiritual Breakthrough

by Jim Gifford



Black Elk's vision. Icon by Robert Lentz, Bridge Building Images

Black Elk, the great Oglala holy man, was shown a magnificent vision by the sacred Thunder-beings. He said of his vision, "And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father."

Christ enthroned. Icon by Robert Lentz, Bridge Building Images

The Biblical prophets had fantastic visions of God. In this vision of Christ, the blue spheres around him represent eternity and the red squares represent time. Winged seraphim surround Christ and Ezekiel's winged beasts emerge from the four directions. God and human, Christ bridges time and eternity. Greek letters in his halo signify, "I am who I am."

Breakdown or spiritual breakthrough? This question has been central to my intellectual thought and pursuits since I was first hospitalized, over 30 years ago, for what was then diagnosed as manic-depression, now known as bi-polar affective disorder.

During the 1970s, I was admitted for psychiatric care over a dozen times and have spent five years in halfway houses, all of this after having to withdraw from law school. I had initially experienced "cosmic consciousness," unity with the divine, that was expressed in the imagery of my western roots as "I am God."

Although such declarations of godhead are extremely dangerous to verbalize in our culture because of the heretical and blasphemous megalomania implied, it is accepted and revered by other peoples and in other times. Such revelatory epiphanies are the essence of the emergence of Eastern holy persons, such as Indian gurus and Sufi masters and, of particular interest to me, shamans.

In the aboriginal world, the experiences of mania and schizophrenia are esteemed for their inner value and growth potential. They are the path to becoming a shaman: psychic, seer, magus, healer, an eminent figure in the community.

Amid the throes of *rite de passage*, the aboriginal seeker undergoes an intense physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual crisis. Literally thrust into the wilderness, he/she is cast into the role of wounded visionary of dead spirits and the supernatural animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms.

He/she accesses the dark side of the psyche and, in a psychotic state, is overwhelmed by intuitive magic haunting with its occult powers, including terrifying demons which, in essence, are the unexpressed shadow of the dynamic archetypes of humanity. One may ultimately connect with the core of being and God Itself. Delusions, hearing voices, and hallucinations are integral to this Vision Quest.

By expressing these potent images of inner reality, the seeker comes to accept and be reconciled with these influences seeking to control, possess and manipulate him/her. When this sojourn has run its course, the now full-fledged "wounded healer" returns to his people as a key figure.

Like the shamanic trial, manic-schizophrenia-psychosis among the so-called mentally ill is a time of aberrant behavior characterized by extreme emotional excitability, impetuosity, frenzy of ideas, rambling speech, prophetic visions, and delusions of grandeur.

A key of shamanic intuition is seeing the multi-dimensional worlds as fundamentally vibrational. As a manic-depressive, I am fascinated with the discoveries of quantum physics. What strikes me is the basic concept that all matter is interwoven as waves, troughs and particles, i.e. wavicles.

The universe is in a state of cyclical vibrational swing, known for millennia by Eastern mystics and Western esotericists as being fundamental to existence. Those going through moodswing highs and lows are mirrors reflecting this cosmic law. The Western world's linear, logical and rational thinking, a product of the work of Aristotle, Newton and Descartes, debases such apparently irrational and abnormal behavior as pathologically demented.

In extreme emotional polarity, the manic state is one of a rush of excitement, even ecstasy, all around and through the individual. That which is described as psychosis is actually a survival instinct in play: the effort to control and order the mystical fires of "scattered psychic energy."

During the struggle to come to terms with this energy, the sensitivity to waves of internal and external life-force is so overwhelming as to appear to conventional mindsets as disoriented and debilitating. There is an intense burst and overcapacity of peripheral input, for, unlike "normal" people who discriminate and select image patterns according to survival and interest molds, those in spiritual emergency have the mammoth task of making sense and meaning of sensory information flooding the mind like a tidal wave.

Symbols are used as unifying tools: telephone poles are crosses; birds are angels; and stars are neurons of God's Mind. Such metaphors, that allow this sensory swamping to settle into a form of clarity, are the result of falling and imploding into the Abyss, frequently without guides or maps. He/she penetrates the Sources of Being that have been coated over in mankind's history with layer-on-layer of the "civilizing syndrome."

Perceived madness is the acting out, in relationship to the world's daily surroundings, of these awakened and rediscovered entities of the psychological depths. Often creatively gifted as artists, poets, musicians, these individuals' eccentric perceptions, perspectives and attitudes reveal the thin line between insanity and genius.

In this regard, it is interesting to note the comments of Buckminster Fuller, one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. He had suffered an intellectual and spiritual crisis as a young man and, years later, when asked if he was a genius, he said no, he just didn't have any borders or divisions in his head.

Many souls find themselves imprisoned in asylums, subjected to medication, therapy and shock treatment, for having expressed allusions of metaphorical language that are misunderstood by the mainstream populace in whom latent unconscious images often only surface in sleep. Unfortunately, in our material-oriented culture, these souls, who are driven to the upheaval of dis-ease that leads to psychic death and rebirth, are cast aside as fringe members of society who are unheard, ridiculed or ignored.

In the Ocean of the Unconscious, some learn to swim, while others drown. At odds with, and totally unacceptable to, the safety and status quo of the Establishment, their profound period of transformation is stigmatically labeled by an intervening and controlling psychiatric profession. Institutionalized, they are demeaned, demoralized and dehumanized.

Personally, I see my journey as a voyage of discovery which, by means of extreme growing pains, has unlocked my unconscious, releasing fathomless energy, and granting me a heightened and enlightened awareness. In my life I needed to learn the focus and centering that would encourage balance. In accepting a basic religious precept, I aspired to be "dead to the world" of vibrations — emptying, life became more abundant. Truly, to lose one's life is to gain it.

Today, I have a deep and broad sense of myself and my place in the greater scheme of things. I realize each of us is special and unique, with our own life stories, gifts, idiosyncrasies, and genetic coding, to name but a few aspects that accentuate our diversity. And yet, in our heart of hearts, we are the One Source that moves both atoms and stars.

In esoteric philosophy, the universe is Mind, the "Great Thought of God." To me, it is the "Ultimate Dream" and we are actor, director, producer, and audience, in this performance known as the "Magic Show," matter or illusion flowing through God's Universal Stream of Consciousness.

In this context, I recall the ancient Chinese Taoist story of Chuang Tzu, about the man who dreams he is a butterfly. Ever after, he is uncertain if he really is a man dreaming he is a butterfly, or rather is a butterfly dreaming he is a man.

Truly, reality is in the mind of the beholder. Two games from our childhood have a mystical nature: in one, you may say God is playing Hide-and-Seek with Itself; in the other, God is playing tag — and you are it. Yet, we must always be mindful of our mortal humanity on this plane of existence. In one of his *Graceland* songs, Paul Simon sings, "thinking I had supernatural powers, I slammed into a brick wall."

Although the concept of the "Second Coming of Christ" still rings true to me today, allow me to clarify. Realizing All Creation is in Christ, Buddha, or whatever you name It, and the same source is in All Creation, I sense I am surrounded, suffused and infused with Christ Consciousness or Buddha Nature. The Kingdom of God is, in Beatle George Harrison's lyrics, "within you and without you," exuding a profound all-right-ness.

Let us hope and pray some day that those who undergo a "breakthrough breakdown" are allowed and encouraged to ascend the spiral of change and, gifted with tender loving care, to grow into the sacredness that is the birthright of us all. With our insights, we may help those struggling in the mind-maze and reveal to mankind its holistic nature.

Noted psychiatrist Carl Jung has remarked, "the deeper the crisis; the rarer the spirit." The Chinese character for crisis is composed of two symbols: one is danger; the other opportunity.

I am reminded of the saying, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." The time has come to exercise our compassion by salvaging and redeeming, from the black hole of psychiatric analysis and societal ostracism, our beleaguered fellow humans. Perhaps one day such persons will be respected and their healing, through trial and tribulation, reflected upon by a sick and estranged civilization. Perhaps those who have been through psychic dis-ease may be seen as an example of the process of healing through psychic death and rebirth.

Today, en masse, we are diving into the depths of the Universal Sea of Mind, struggling to stay afloat, suffering cosmic pain. In these days of extreme polarity, immense power, both black and white, is being unleashed, accelerating towards Harmonic Convergence. Breakthrough Light shall Stream through Blue Healing Consciousness, Blessing Us with Peace of Mind Beyond Understanding of Knowledge's Duality of Good and Evil.

As the song "Nature boy" says:

"the greatest thing you will ever learn
is just to love and be loved in return."